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FAMOUS CRIMES

PAST AND PRESENT

ONE · PENNY

THE MURDER OF WEARE BY THURTELL.

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THE TRUE and TRAGIC TALE of THURTELL

The Brutal Murder of Mr. Weare in 1823 by Thurtell, Hunt, and Probert: One of the Causes-Celèbres of the Last Century.

"Murder is the Usurpation of the Power of God. To take the life of a man—or woman—is to willfuly destroy His divine handiwork."

—THIBAULT, "The Moods of Man.

PART I.

CERTAIN cases in the lurid history of crime seem to have taken greater hold upon the imagination than others, and to have remained longer and more vividly in the public mind. These have not always been the most brutal or sensational. The murder of Maria Martin by Willian Corder, for instance, was of an unromantic and somewhat sordid nature, and yet it is an event as generally known and as well remembered as Napoleon's débâcle at Waterloo or the wicked and wanton execution of that martyred monarch, King Charles I. But the case of Thurtell is one of the most intense interest, and it is not difficult to account for or understand the almost universal excitement and sensation it called forth eighty years or so ago. No element of a dramatic kind is lacking in the tragic story. Thurtell, as a criminal, caught the public eyes as few murderers have done, and the tale of his dastardly deed has become history. He ranks amongst the great malefactors of this country, and England rang with his name as it did later with that of Mr. and Mrs. Manning, James Rush, William Palmer, Constance Kent, and others of the élite of he criminal fraternity. Thackeray and Thomas Hood ha: both made literary use of the circumstances attending e cruel murder of Mr. Weare, and a "Life of Thurtell" vs issued in 1824 by one of the best-known London publishrs of the time.

Nothing more cru or cowardly than this lurid crime has ever been commited. To invite a man down to one's place for a little shoting, to receive him with every outward indication of fendship and esteem, and then to pursue him up a lnely lane and twist and turn the barrel of a pistol in is brain, afterwards hurling the disfigured corpse into a pnd—these things strike the imagination with absolute hrror. The mind recoils from such unnatural happenings

It is none the lessa fact, as strange as it is inexplicable, that the monster pripally concerned in this dark deed was not entirely bad. Cruel and remorseless, with no idea of the sanctity of human life, he certainly was; but Jack Thurtell, nevertheless, had many friends and a whole host of admirers, who coud not find it in their hearts to speak ill of him, even after the whole ghastly truth became known. Nevertheless, there never existed the least excuse for his abominable act of ferocity and treachery, and there is every reason to believe that Weare would not have been his only victim if further opportunity for bloodshed had been afforded him. He is credited with having formed a scheme of general murder and robbery. The idea was that he should take a house in a remote and solitary part of London, and induce wealthy men to resort there for the purposes of play—for Thurtell was a gambler and the associate of gamblers. He belonged to the fraternity of "sharps" after a somewhat extensive and peculiar experience as a "flat." He knew all the blacklegs of the day, and was very popular in prize-fighting circles. His was a familiar figure at Newmarket. He was devoted to such intellectual pursuits as cock-fighting and rat-killing, and was an habitué at all sporting resorts. The amiable Thurtell was fully prepared to murder his guests one by one and consign their remains to the Thames; but, fortunately for a few of his friends, fate took a hand in this murderous game, and played all the trumps after he had put "paid" to the account of the unfortunate Weare.

With these few words of preliminary, I can commence my task and put my readers in possession of all the facts relating to Thurtell and his victim. They, in the aggregate, form a strange human document indeed!

First, let me introduce my dramatis personæ. John Thurtell, of infamous memory, was born at Norwich, and was one of the sons of a bombazine manufacturer in that town.

His father was a wel'-to-do man, and an alderman of that city, and was therefore able to bestow a very good education—as times went then—upon his offspring. At an early age John Thurtell procured a commission in the Royal Marines, and served on board the "Bellona" from 1812 to 1814, besides taking part in several land engagements during the Peninsular War. When peace came in 1815, he abandoned, perforce, a military occupation, and his father set him up in the same line of business as himself; but he got into debt at Norwich, through his liking for a fast life, and was obliged to leave the town in 1818, taking with him a Miss Davis, with whom he lived for several years.

Arrived in London, he commenced to cut a gay figure in the sporting circles there, and was christened "The Swell Yokel" among the flash set, whose acquaintance he cultivated and encouraged. He had brought with him from the quiet country town a few hundreds, which did not, however, last him long in such a "rapid" society, and he soon became the natural prey of all the sharks of the capital. He was free and careless with his money, and the rooks of society found him, for not a little time, a very profitable pigeon indeed. The Thurtell exchequer was speedily emptied—with their aid—and the whilom flat began to emulate the deeds of the sharp and to look out for victims whom he might fleece on his own account. He was a powerful man, with a masterful and determined

demeanour, and it was not long before he began to acquire a remarkable influence in the blackleg circles, even with those who had originally despised and despoiled him. He became a leader and a favourite among the swell-mobsmen of the period, and his strength and fighting pro-

Refused to lend him a five pound note.

clivities earned for him a decided respect with the questionable gentry in whose midst he moved.

At this time he was about thirty years of age, well-proportioned, and close on six feet high. His face, which was always remarkably pale, was clean-shaven, and his hair was cut rather close to his head, the colour a light brown. The forehead was rather high, but somewhat narrow; the face neither broad nor sharp; the nose rather refined and delicate; the eyes grey, and conveying a stern and yet stealthy expression. His face was marred by certain pock-marks, but for which he might have passed for a rather good-looking man. He was always well-dressed, in a somewhat loud, sporting style, and affected a Belcher neck-handkerchief, generally of a blue and bird's-eye pattern. He did not look exactly like a bruiser; he looked as if he were trying to look like one!

About the year 1823, Thurtell established himself at the Golden Cross in Long Acre, and this tavern became the resort of most of the West-end sportsmen, who were attracted to the place by Miss Davis, passing at that time as the wife of the proprietor. The business was not, however, conducted in the most circumspect manner, and the licence being suspended, Thurtell was obliged to abandon the house. He deserted the unhappy Miss Davis, who retaliated by spoiling a little game which John and his brother, Thomas Thurtell, were preparing for the benefit (?) of the County Fire Insurance Office.

Thomas Thurtell was in business in London, and had warehouse-premises in Watling Street. Though he possessed none of the bloodthirsty attributes of his infamous brother, Thomas Thurtell was far from being a Bayard, without fear or reproach, and the two conspired together to swindle the insurance company. The house in Watling Street was destroyed one night by fire, and the company would certainly have paid over the amount of the insurance, if Miss Davis had not conveniently called upon a Mr. Barber Beaumont, one of the directors, and satisfied him that the fire was the result rather of design than of accident. It was at this period that John Thurtell's sanguinary mind began to create a scheme of wholesale murder, and he himself acknowledged that he had intended the aforementioned Mr. Beaumont to be one of his earliest victims. He also planned the destruction of a Mr. Woods, who was engaged to a young lady of whom Thurtell supposed himself to be enamoured; but this wily young gentleman appears to have entertained some suspicions as to the amiable intentions of his guide, philosopher, and friend, and to have found a way out of the web so artfully spun for him!

At this stage appears upon the scene the lurid figure of the murdered man, William Weare. Now, the fate of this creature was so inexpressibly terrible that one is naturally loth to urge anything in his disfavour; but candour compels me to add that he never was of much use or ornament to society, and that what we know of his character is distinctly indifferent. He was a gambler pure—or impure—and simple, and his schemings were never marred by any scruples of conscience. He had assisted materially in the "plucking" of the pigeon, Thurtell, and on one occasion when he had won £300 at a sitting from that worthy, cleaning him out for the time being, he had refused to lend him a five-pound note. Thurtell was not the sort of man to forget or forgive what he considered an ill-turn, and he there and then determined to bring Mr. Weare's career to an untimely close as quickly as possible. With this view, he treated him with much apparent friendliness, and, in spite of their gambling transactions, which generally lead to a severance of friendship, the two men were outwardly on the most cordial terms.

The reader being now introduced to and acquainted with the principals in this dramatic affair, let me bring on to the stage the walking gentlemen playing utility parts, as represented by Joseph Hunt and William Probert.

Purchased a pair of pocket pistols.

The first of these supernumeraries was a member of a respectable family, and had some theatrical associations. His brother was a first-class tenor, and had appeared at Covent Garden Theatre with marked success; while his sister married a military captain of the name of O'Reilly.

Joseph Hunt was more conspicuous for low knavery than for intelligence, and was completely dominated by the superior mental attainments and stronger will of Thurtell, with whom he was more of a butt than anything else. At one time he kept the Army and Navy Coffee House in St. Martin's Lane, but having to abandon that venture, he joined the sporting fraternity and lived by small depredations at the gaming table. He was about thirty-three years of age, a well-proportioned and rather good-looking man with a dark complexion and black eyes and hair.

William Probert was the son of a respectable farmer, and was born at Ross, Herefordshire, in the year 1782. In the year 1813 he married the daughter of a Mr. Noyes, an ex-brewer, and, receiving quite a handsome property with his wife, he started as a wine-merchant, taking apartments in Coventry Street, and opening extensive wine-cellars in the Haymarket. In this business he continued till the middle of the year 1819, when he appeared in the Gazette as a bankrupt, having failed for no less a sum than £22,000.

UNDER THE TANGLED HEDGE THE BODY LAY.

With a remnant of his shattered fortunes, he retired with his wife and family to a cottage outside London, of which more anon. He was indubitably a very great scoundrel, and he had not even the one or two redeeming traits which distinguished Thurtell. Probert was a man of colossal stature; he was bony, muscular, and powerful, with a short neck and round shoulders. Dark in complexion, with staring eyes and inanimate features, he was not at all a prepossessing individual, and, without the courage and audacity of Thurtell, he had, perhaps, as much ferocity of disposition and even more self-esteem. I make no apology for introducing this distinguished triumvirate at such length, as they play the most important parts in my drama, and the reader would, it is to be presumed, be interested in knowing the character and antecedents of the various actors. And now for

THE CRIME.

It must be thoroughly understood that the actual murder was perpetrated by Thurtell alone; but it is none the less certain that both Hunt and Probert were fully aware with what fell purpose Weare had been invited to pay a visit to the latter's cottage. Hunt bought the weapons with which the deed was to be done; both he and Probert assisted in disposing of the body, and each was handed a certain portion of the booty obtained from the murdered man, although I think it can be accepted as a fact that they were cheated by Thurtell, the master-mind, out of their fair share of the plunder.

Mr. Weare rented chambers at Lyon's Inn, at that time and for many years after adjacent to the Strand. On October 24 this gentleman went home to his rooms, and informed his housekeeper that he was going into the country for a few days' shooting. This was in the forenoon, and, after partaking of a hearty dinner of chops, he packed up in a carpet bag some changes of linen and other things necessary for an excursion of a few days. It may be interpolated here that Weare had a great dislike for and suspicion of banks, and that he usually carried about with him a considerable sum of money, a fact which was well known to the scoundrel who was planning his destruction. Weare also took with him a double-barrel gun, a backgammon board, with men and dice, and with these things he got into a hackney coach and departed from Lyon's Inn between three and four o'clock in the afternoon. He was driven first to Charing Cross, then to Maddox Street, near Hanover Square, and afterwards to the New Road, now called the New North Road. He left the coach in this district, and returned after some time with another person, whom he took into the vehicle with him. John Thurtell and his brother Thomas were at this time lodging at the house of a Mr. Tetsall, in Conduit Street, Hanover Square. They had taken up their abode at this place for purposes of temporary concealment, as they were unable to find bail in regard to the charges against them made by the insurance company, and this hiding-place had been secured for them by Probert. They had occupied this lodging some days prior to the murder, and continued to stay there until their arrest; but I must mention here that Thomas Thurtell was in no way connected with his brother's horrid crime.

On the morning of Ocober 24, 1823—the date of the

murder of Mr. Weare—Thurtell and Hunt went to a pawnbroker's in Marylebone, and purchased a pair of pocket-pistols. During the course of the same day, Hunt hired a gig at one place and a horse at another, under pretence of going to Dartford, in Kent. At one of these places he inquired where he could procure a sack, and was directed to a shop over Westminster Bridge, where he obtained what he required. Hunt, John Thurtell, and Probert all assembled by appointment at the Coach and Horses in Conduit Street, and it was then arranged that Thurtell should take the gig and pick up "a friend"—who was, of course, no other than Weare—while Hunt and Probert should follow murderer and victim at a convenient distance in another conveyance. A little later the same evening, Thurtell was seen in a gig with a roan iron-grey horse, with white legs, by the patrol on the road to Edgware, and afterwards beyond that town by the landlord of a public-house, who was able to positively identify the person who was sitting beside Thurtell in the vehicle. It was undoubtedly Mr. Weare, and that unhappy man was never again seen alive.

Probert and Hunt set out in the former's gig some time after Thurtell left the Coach and Horses, and overtook the latter and his "friend" upon the road. However, the pair of worthies conducted their murderous enterprise in a less businesslike way than the determined Thurtell, and they remained on the road, drinking at several public-houses, so that the last-named and his victim got a good way ahead again. They purchased a loin of pork in the Edgware Road, and arranged together that this should be cooked for dinner by the unsuspecting Mrs. Probert after "Jack" had cooked the goose of his friend! They had several drinks on the way, and saw nothing more of Thurtell on the road; but when they arrived at a place called Phillimore Lodge, about a mile beyond Edgware, Hunt got out of the trap, and Probert drove towards home, telling the former to await his return. In a lane near his cottage he encountered Thurtell—alone! That gentleman was in a boastful, excited, and exultant mood, and he heartily cursed his confederates for not having been there to assist him in his enterprise. The following conversation ensued:

Thurtell: "Where is Hunt?"

Probert: "I left him on the road waiting for you. I expect he will come on soon."

Thurtell: "Well, I have killed my friend, and now I don't want him."

Probert: "Have you really done it? Good God!"

Thurtell: "I have; and now I am happy, for he has robbed me of several hundreds."

Hunt then came up, and the three walked on to the gates of the cottage, the former asking Thurtell where he had passed him on the road. Thurtell replied: "It don't matter where I passed you, for I have done the trick." The villain remarked that "he meant to do others in the same way," and subsequently related all the circumstances of the murder. He said that the pistols proved to be no better than pop-guns, for he fired them in his companion's face without effect, and that the latter then leaped out of the gig and ran away up the lane, crying out that he would restore all the money he had won from Thurtell and more besides if he—"Jack"—would spare his life. The hardened and remorseless brute pursued him up the lane, and seized him by the throat, when a terrible life and death struggle began. At one time Weare seemed to be getting the better of his powerful assailant, with such desperation did he fight for life; but Thurtell had got a knife handy, and with it he succeeded in inflicting two or three severe wounds upon the poor wretch's throat. Even then Weare continued the unequal struggle, and, finally, the murderer grasped the pistol firmly, and thrust the barrel into his temple, turning the weapon round and round again and again in his brain. Thus was accomplished one of the cruellest and most cowardly deeds in the history of crime.

At this stage it becomes necessary to give some account of the cottage occupied by Probert and of the scene of this dastardly murder. Well, the former was originally a farm-house, and was, in 1823, in a very decayed and crazy condition—a circumstance which enabled Probert to secure it on very easy terms. Placed upon an eminence, it commanded a wide view of the surrounding country, and was approached only by two close and gloomy lanes, one of which was the famous Gill's Hill Lane, the scene of the crime. The cottage itself has been described to me as a rough, uneven, though rather picturesque fabric, which was heightened by its peculiar form, its turret-looking chimneys, the dark, weird roof of the kitchen, and the thin, spiry poplar, whose branches overtopped the sloping roof. There was a pond in the garden some little distance from the house, which was almost surrounded by trees, and the view from here was a very fine one.

Passing the cottage, and close by the then-deserted farmyard, on the other side of the road, one entered the

Listened at the keyhole.

dark and dismal ravine of Gill's Hill Lane. The very approach to it looked as if one were about to thread the mazes of those subterranean labyrinths in which bandits loved to dwell. Beneath hedges which met overhead, and through which there was hardly one point of escape, it twined along for about three-quarters of a mile, at the end of which it assumed a character even more sombre and secluded. Never in a rich, beautiful, and well-peopled country was there a lane more dismal and gloomy. It was so narrow that one could with difficulty pass through it, so crooked that one could not see backwards or forwards, so overshadowed that the beams of heaven never lit upon it, so tangled that there was no lateral escape, and so remote from the dwellings of humanity that the loudest cry could scarcely be audible.

Gill's Hill is about fifteen miles northward of London, three miles into Hertfordshire, and, in passing northward, about a mile to the left of the road from Elstree to St. Albans. On a spot in the lane where one or two bushy trees then formed an almost impenetrable canopy, this deed of cruel, calculating ferocity was done.

And now let us return to the murderer and his accom-

plices. The tired horse—Thurtell had driven at a great pace—was given to a boy in the employ of Probert to look after, and the three worthies entered the house to be introduced to the ladies, by whom neither Thurtell nor Hunt was expected. The family inhabiting the house consisted of Mrs. Probert and her children, a Miss Noyes, a sister of the former's, and a female servant. Hunt was not known to them, and was formally introduced; after which the loin of pork was taken by the former into the kitchen and cut into chops, preparatory to dinner. Something was said about going out to call upon a distant neighbour during the preparation for supper, and the worthy trio left the cottage—not, however, to call upon Mr. Nichols, the neighbour in question, but to examine the mangled body of the murdered man and to remove the plunder. They took with them a lantern and proceeded to the place where, under the trampled and broken hedge, the body lay. It was placed in a sack brought for the purpose after the contents of the pockets had been removed, and then dragged through the hedge for better security, albeit the place was so lonely that it might have remained there for many hours without discovery. They then returned to the cottage, and Thurtell procured a sponge and endeavoured to wipe out the blood-stains on his clothing, which had been observed by the lad in Probert's employ. The supper was then dished, and Hunt and Probert actually ate four or five large pork chops each. But the actual murderer was not able to consume a morsel; not, indeed, from any question of conscience or remorse, but because some of the dead man's blood had spurted into his—Thurtell's—mouth as he cut his throat and had made him sick! A not unnatural nausea, I fancy! Thurtell produced a gold watch-chain—it was Weare's—and one of this agreeable company remarked that it was fitter for a lady than a gentleman, whereupon the former made Mrs. Probert accept it as a present, and himself placed it about her neck. Hunt then sang a couple of songs—he was given to entertaining his friends in this way—and shortly afterwards the two ladies made preparation for retiring for the night. It was suggested that Miss Noyes should give up her bedroom to Hunt and Thurtell, and herself sleep with the servant-maid or the children; but to this the two men would not consent, and preferred to sit up, saying that they wished to become used to late hours. The women retired, leaving the three men together in the parlour; but something in their manner or behaviour would appear to have excited the suspicions of Mrs. Probert, and she remained up and listened at the keyhole to their conversation. They appeared to be trying on some articles of clothing.

One man she heard say, "I think that will fit you very well." She heard also the rustling of papers and a sound which suggested that some letters or documents were being thrown on the fire. She then went up to her bedroom, and from the shadow of the blind looked out upon the garden. She saw two men go from the parlour to the stable. They took a lantern with them, and removed a horse from the stable, opening the yard gates to let him out. Mrs. Probert was considerably alarmed and startled at all this, and waited, in much misgiving, for further developments. Presently she observed two men dragging a sack through the walk towards the pond, and heard a noise as of some heavy substance being cast into the water. The men then returned to the parlour, and Mrs. Probert crept down again, and listened over the banisters. She heard Hunt say, "Let us take a five-pound note each," and Thurtell afterwards remarked, "We must say, to account for the blood, that a hare was thrown upon the cushion of the gig, of which some one made us a present coming along. We must tell the boy so in the morning." She next heard a voice say, "We had better be off by four or five o'clock in the morning to town." Thurtell said significantly, "Holding shall be the next"; to which Hunt replied, "Has he got any money?" Thurtell said, "It is not money I want; it is revenge. It is Holding that ruined my friend here"—meaning Probert. At two o'clock Mrs. Probert went to bed, and, when joined by her husband, she made some allusion to what she had

THE POND IN PROBERT'S GARDEN.

Drawn from a sketch made at the time of the tragedy.

seen and heard; but he reassured her, and stated that he had done nothing which could get him into any trouble.

Thurtell had given each man what he represented as the share of the booty, amounting to about six pounds each, and Weare's gold watch he retained for his own use, he having, as he said, "done the lion's share of the work." Rather, we think, the jackal's! Early in the morning of the 25th, Hunt and Thurtell went out together to the lane, and found a man at work there. To him they stated that they had been nearly capsized in the gig the night before; but the man thought all was not quite right, and when he examined the spot where Thurtell had been searching, he observed a great quantity of blood. On searching further, he found a bloody knife and a pocket-pistol, which was one of those bought by Hunt on the morning of the murder. Both weapons were blood-stained, and the barrel of the pistol was found to contain some human brains. Hunt had taken the double-barrel gun and the backgammon board belonging to the deceased, and they were found in his possession when he was arrested at the Coach and Horses in Conduit Street.

It now becomes necessary to explain to the reader how this sanguinary deed was discovered, and the perpetrator brought to justice.

It would seem that persons residing in the district round about Gill's Hill Lane had already entertained some misgivings that a great crime had been enacted in their midst; partly by reason of the discovery of the pistol and knife and partly because of the blood observed by the hedge in the lane. To add to these circumstances of suspicion, it transpired that some persons who happened to be in or near the lane about eight o'clock on the night of October 24, distinctly heard the report of a gun or pistol, which was followed by voices as if in contention. Violent groans, growing fainter and fainter, succeeded, and then died away altogether. Inquiry was made, but of course no body was found, and though some suspicion seems to have been already directed towards the Probert cottage full discovery was to be delayed a little longer.

On Saturday, October 25, Thurtell and Hunt left Probert's place in the gig, and when he arrived in town the latter seemed to be unusually gay and jovial. At the Coach and Horses he was heard to observe to a friend, "We Turpin lads can do the trick. I am able to drink wine now, and I will drink nothing but wine." It was noticed that Thurtell's hands were very much scratched, and, some remark having been made on the subject, he stated "that they had been out netting partridges," and that "his hands got scratched in that occupation." The next day being Sunday, John Thurtell, his brother Thomas, Mr. Noyes, and Hunt spent the day at Probert's cottage. Hunt went down dressed in a manner so very shabby as to excite remark; but during the day he went upstairs and attired himself in very fine clothes—which, by the way, had been the property of Weare. Hunt brought down with him to Gill's Hill a new spade, and he informed Probert it was "to dig a hole to bury the body in." On that evening the last-named went to visit a Mr. Nicholls, who said to him, "I am told that the report of a gun or a pistol was heard in the lane on Friday evening, but I suppose it was some foolish joke or other." Probert, on his return, repeated this conversation to Hunt and Thurtell, and the latter evinced some alarm, and said "he feared he should be hanged."

Probert desired that the body should immediately be removed from his pond, and Thurtell and Hunt promised to return on the Monday and hide it elsewhere. Probert's boy was taken, on some pretext, to the house in Conduit Street and lodged there, in order that he might not be about while the body was removed from the pond.

On the evening of the Monday, Hunt and Thurtell came down to the cottage, and the former engaged Mrs. Probert in conversation while Thurtell and Probert took out the body, put it into the gig, and it was taken away by Hunt and Thurtell—to what place Probert was not informed.

A short distance from Elstree on the northern side is a pond called Hill's Slough. It is formed by a small brook, which comes from the right hand in proceeding northwards, and is situated close by the side of the road. It is bounded by the hedge, and juts, as it were, into the road, from which it is railed off by a small fence. Within the pond there are many shallows and clusters of rushes, and there was only one small space of it which suited the purpose of the murderers. In this piece of water were hurled the now decomposing remains of the unfortunate Mr. Weare.

There can be very little doubt—in the light of subsequent revelations—that Probert began to consider at this stage the advisability of saving, if possible, his own precious neck, and that it at once occurred to him that this desirable end could only be accomplished by the gentle process known as "putting away" his two delightful friends.

That he was a thoroughly bad man cannot be denied; but it is extremely questionable if he was really a willing partner to the murder of Weare. It seems to me that he was rather a tool, in this particular instance, in the hands of Thurtell and Hunt, and that he never quite believed that the former really meditated so serious a crime. That he was privy to the robbery and to the disposal of the body is certain; but he appears to have entertained some aversion to the deed, and he often declared that he did not have a moment's rest day or night until the corpse was removed from its watery grave in his garden. It afterwards transpired that Thurtell had threatened that he himself "should be the next" if he spoke a word respecting the fate of Weare, and Probert well knew his friend's determination and ruthlessness of purpose. Thurtell, Hunt, and Probert, in fact, represented—as regards this murder—the degrees superlative, comparative, and positive of guilt, and no one who has carefully studied the case can doubt that the onus of the crime lay mainly with the first two.

The corpse of Weare having been immersed in the pond near Elstree, Thurtell and Hunt returned to town, and the latter, now thoroughly alarmed for his own safety, proceeded to disguise himself by the simple expedient of removing his whiskers and moustachios. The two villains believed that all was safe enough so long as the body was not found, as they could not well be charged with the murder of a person unknown whose remains had not been discovered. But the very few persons who resided near Probert entertained considerable suspicion of that gentleman's establishment, and had always done so. Queer-looking characters had often been seen going to or from the lonely cottage, and rumour began to associate that ill-omened dwelling and its inhabitants with some mysterious crime.

No one particularly inquired after Weare when he was found to be missing from his usual haunts in London, for he had given out to all his friends that he would be in the country on a visit during the next few days, and that his return was uncertain. But Providence, that mysterious dispenser of good and evil, had designed in its own inscrutable fashion that this murder at least should be brought to light, and that in the most sensational way. The corpse had been placed in a sack, which reached to the knees; but it had not been weighted sufficiently to sink properly, and Probert, passing the spot, discovered, to his horror, that the feet were visible above the water! Thurtell and Hunt were sent for post-haste, and arranged a device by which the body might be drawn into a deeper part of the pond. This was not accomplished without extreme difficulty; but, eventually, a lasso was thrown over the protruding feet, and the corpse disappeared for ever, as the malefactors hoped, from human ken.

Remarkable Verdicts.

TRIAL by jury is not without its drawbacks and disadvantages like everything else designed by the wit or ingenuity of man. Few systems in this best of all possible worlds are absolutely flawless, and perfection is not to be obtained by humanity even in these civilising days. At one time I must confess to having entertained grave doubts as to the wisdom of trial by jury—especially, I suspect, when the verdict was adverse to my case—but time has changed all that, and experience has taught me to believe that, in spite of its defects, the system works as well as, or, perhaps, a little better than any other could.

But even Homer nods and there are spots on the sun. I have known juries make very serious errors of judgment, which have sometimes made me smile, and often made me grieve with the judicious. I have heard of verdicts being returned which were altogether against the balance of evidence, and thus has justice herself been frustrated, and either the innocent have suffered or the guilty been allowed to walk abroad free and unpunished. Occasionally even humorous verdicts have been returned, and these have often been recorded in country courts, though a great majority of the stories in this connection are purely apocryphal.

One of the most remarkable verdicts ever recorded in a great criminal case, so far as this country is concerned, was that delivered by the jury who tried an ex-barman, named Richard Gould, for the murder of an old gentleman named Templeman, at Islington, in 1840. The history of this extraordinary case is now familiar to readers of FAMOUS CRIMES, but they were hardly made fully aware of the disgust with which the verdict was received by the public at large. Gould had practically confessed to the crime, and the evidence was of the clearest and most conclusive nature. In spite of a deadly summing-up from the judge and a most feeble and inconsequent defence, the twelve men with whom lay the fate of the prisoner returned into court with a verdict of acquittal. The astonishment of those present was unbounded, and was echoed in the newspapers of the day. Gould was afterwards transported for some minor offence, and while abroad he made no secret of his guilt, being, of course, well aware that he could not again be charged with the crime or retried.

A similar instance of a gross miscarriage of justice, through the cowardice or incompetence of a jury, occurred in the late sixties. The fortunate criminal in this case is, I understand, still alive, so that I am obliged to speak very guardedly on the subject of his crime. He was tried for the murder of the landlady of an inn near a prosperous town in Lancashire. This poor woman had taken compassion upon the wretch when he came to her door to beg, had fed and clothed him and given him some light employment about the house. Ultimately she consented to live with him as his wife, and he rewarded her care and affection by battering in her brains one day and robbing the house. He was arrested, and none entertained the smallest doubt of his guilt. The late Montagu Williams defended this villain, and, in common with all in court, was himself amazed when the foreman of the loutish-looking jury calmly announced a verdict of "Not guilty."

That same night the villain, having been at once discharged, was seen sitting in a public-house smoking and drinking, and was distinctly heard to say boastfully, "Well, they found me not guilty, and I'm —— glad of it! But, nevertheless, this is the hand that did the deed!"

Some years ago—I refrain from mentioning the date for certain reasons—the body of a tramp was found in a ditch by the roadside, with his skull fractured by some heavy implement. It was in a remote country district, and the police of the nearest town were not remarkable for very keen intelligence. They arrested a man who had that morning been known to give sixpence to the deceased and at the same time to have said, in a joking spirit, that if he caught him spending it in drink, he would "break his head." There was no other evidence against him than this, but not only did the coroner's jury bring in a verdict of wilful murder but, the grand jury also finding a true bill, the case had to be tried. If the judge hadn't argued with another dunder-headed twelve and convinced their unreasoning minds of the perfect innocence of the unfortunate prisoner, they would indubitably have hanged him.

Very often justice is defeated through the desire of the "twelve honest men and true" to avoid detention. In the year 1894, at one of the Assizes, the jury, after being away in consultation for an hour, returned into court saying that they could not agree. They were requested to retire again, and as they stepped out of the box, their faces evinced looks of extrême dejection. In a few minutes, however, they returned, apparently well satisfied with the decision they had come to. Although the accused man was palpably guilty, the majority, who were anxious to attend an auction of live stock in a neighbouring town, agreed to abide by the views of an obstinate but determined minority. The foreman announced a verdict of "Not Guilty," and the accused then walked slowly out of the dock, remarking with grim earnestness as he did so, "Thank you, gentlemen. It's the first crime of the sort I ever committed, and often this escape I'll take care it shall be the very last." We must hope that he adhered to this determination.

Very often a country jury will bring in a verdict of acquittal through a desire to befriend the prisoner, who is perhaps an acquaintance of their own, or has, at any rate, some supposed claim to consideration in that particular neighbourhood. A case is related of a poacher charged with the murder of a gamekeeper with whom he was on notoriously bad terms. The defence alleged that the man's death was caused by a fall, his body, dreadfully mangled, having been found at the foot of a high cliff. This theory was, however, demolished by the evidence. The discharge of a gun had been heard that evening from the direction where the remains were found, and some shots found in the head entirely corresponded with those the prisoner used for his own firearms. There were marks of a hand-to-hand struggle about the spot, and a button, similar to those on the coat of the accused—one was missing—was found close by the dead man. In spite of this powerful testimony to the prisoner's guilt, the jury seemed determined to release him, and paid no heed to the damning facts adduced. They asked each witness if he was prepared to swear that the deceased did not fall from the cliff, and displayed such a strong inclination to discredit the testimony, which was really quite reliable, that the judge had to practically take the case in hand and direct them, in the strongest possible manner, to record a verdict in accordance with the evidence, which, he said, conclusively established the prisoner's guilt. It afterwards came to the knowledge of the judge that several of the jurymen were good customers to the prisoner for game, and that they were, for this reason, averse to convict him.

That excellent judge and lawyer, the late Lord Coleridge, used to declare that if he were to relate to an astonished public some of the senseless verdicts brought in by juries, trial by this system would be forthwith abolished.

"Jack" of all Nations.

IT is a curious fact, and proves how remarkably criminal history repeats itself, that most nations have had, at one time or another, a being resembling our own terrible Jack the Ripper.

A few years ago Vienna was ravaged by a monster who looked for his victims amongst the lowest class of women. Paris can quote its "Philippe," who created such a reign of terror in 1866, and Berlin has two Teutonic "Jack the Rippers" to boast of!

Turpin's Cupboard.

THERE is a very interesting old tavern at a village, named Froyle, which is not far from Farnham, in Surrey. It is called the Hen and Chicken, and many are the legends attached to it. It was at one time the resort of highwaymen, who pursued their nefarious vocation on Aldershot Plain and Woking Heath, and was often patronised by the renowned Richard Turpin. They show you a secret cupboard in the chimney breast, which was once used by "Dick" as a hiding-place. The Bush, at Farnham, is nearly as old and as interesting.

Life of Charles Peace.

CHAPTER II.

ON hearing the sound of a fall, Jane Ryan and the Ashbrooks stood listening. From the ominous thud which followed the shot, they knew that someone was hit, but who was it? Was he mortally wounded or only slightly injured? Was he dead?

A shudder passed over them like a cold wind. They drew their breath and heard the same whisperings outside the door.

John Ashbrook placed his sister behind himself and his brother. There was an interval of silence; they began to hope that the burglars had gone, when presently they perceived something on the opposite wall.

They watched it with fascinated eyes. It was a small, dark shadow, creeping towards them along the wall.

It was the shadow of a man's hand.

Then they heard a harsh, rustling sound, as if something was being dragged along the floor.

The robbers were taking away the dead body of their comrade.

They did not dare to move, for they knew the burglars were armed to a far greater extent than they were, and exposure might prove fatal.

Ten minutes passed thus; ten minutes of frightful suspense to these farmers—who were brave but not phlegmatic—who now fought men for the first time, and fought them in the dark.

They could not possibly tell how many there were of their enemies. To fire the only three remaining charges they had would have been an act of madness; they therefore thought it prudent to keep these in reserve for the grand or final conflict.

But the worst was over, as far as the Oakfield housebreakers were concerned.

Presently the eager tramp of men's feet echoed from the road before the farm, and a dozen rough voices were heard bawling to each other.

The besieged party rushed to the window, and saw in the front of the house one of the village constabulary force, who was accompanied by a posse of strong-bodied youths of the immediate neighbourhood. In addition to these there were shepherds armed with crowbars, stablemen with their pitchforks, bird-keepers with their rusty fowling-pieces, woodmen with their bill-hooks, and a tall relation of Jane Ryan's with a substantial kitchen poker.

The reports of the gun and pistol in the dead hour of the night had aroused the whole neighbourhood.

As may be readily imagined, the strong reinforcement at once dispelled all anxiety or doubt in the minds of the farmer's household.

Three men were instantly mounted, and started off in the dark to the three nearest railway stations. The rest were invited into the kitchen to wait till daybreak.

There had been an unprecedented number of burglaries committed at several houses in the neighbourhood within the space of a few months—hence it was that the rustic population were so keenly alive when any signal of alarm was given.

To capture the robbers was the wish of every one assembled at Oakfield on that eventful night.

With the first streaks of dawn the party congregated in the yard, and took counsel on the best means of pursuit.

"If they have been carrying a body with them, they can't be very far off," said Mr. Jamblin.

"They are lurking about somewhere hard by, I dare say," said the police officer.

"Where's Jarvis?" cried Will, the carter. "He'd be the boy to find 'em for us. He'd ketch 'em if they burrowed underground like a rabbit."

"Would he?" ejaculated the policeman. "He must be a clever chap."

"Ay, that he be," returned another rustic.

"Have you got any more of his sort in this neighbourhood?" asked the officer.

The rustics made no reply.

"Who is this Jarvis you were speaking of?" inquired John Ashbrook.

"Jarvis, sir? Why, him as 'listed some years ago, and fought under Lord Clyde in the Injies. Arter that they sent him to the other Injies, where the red men be, and they've taught him a power of strange tricks. He came here wi' us, but he's got lost since, or summ'at."

"No, I baint lost, Joe," said a tall young man, whose left cheek was one great red scar, and whose face had been bronzed by no English sun.

"Why, sure enough, it is Jarvis!" exclaimed Mr. Ashbrook. "Give us your hand, lad. Sure enough I shouldn't ha' known ye, they've knocked ye about so."

"Ay, that they have, Master Ashbrook," returned the soldier. "But tell us, neighbour, what you can about this night's business."

"You shall know all I know," answered the farmer, who thereupon put the soldier in possession of all the facts with which the reader is already acquainted.

When he had finished, the soldier said, "I'll be bound for it that the body of the dead or wounded man is not very far from here."

"You think not?"

"Ah! that I do. We came up so soon that they'd have no time to get far away with that load upon their backs; and most likely they've been forced to hide it in a slovenly way."

CHAPTER III.

The sudden disappearance of Charles Peace and his two companions upon the arrival of the villagers excited surprise in the minds of all who had assembled at the farm-house. The police officer did not choose to commit himself by any expression of opinion. He was not a man given to loquacity where silence was requisite. He did not, however, attempt to deny the assertion made by soldier Jarvis—namely, that the robbers were not far off.

Enjoining the villagers to stay where they were, and to carefully avoid treading over more ground than was absolutely necessary, the young soldier accompanied Mr. Ashbrook to the kitchen window, where the entrance had been forced by removing the glass with a diamond—or "starring the glaze," as it is termed in the burglar's phraseology—and after this had been done panelling the shutter. It was this last process that aroused Jane Ryan to a sense of danger.

Jarvis carefully examined the ground beneath the window, and pointed to some footprints in the wet earth which led towards the straw yard. In one place they were so plain that every nail in the soles could be distinguished.

"They are the impressions of a strange foot—that's certain sure," observed Ashbrook.

"We are on the trail of one of them," returned Jarvis. "I dare say they thought they could do as they liked among yokels, but we've got the trail and I mean to keep it."

The speaker walked slowly across the yard, following the tracks with his eye as a bloodhound would have followed them with his nose.

"They're in this barn, Master Ashbrook," he said, stopping before one of the doors. "No, they baint, though, they're come out agen and gone along the wall. But they've left their dead mate behind 'em. See how different their track is now; they tramples quite close alongside of each other, while afore they carried the body from shoulder to shoulder, and so were forced to walk one behind and a little way apart."

The villagers gave a murmur of astonishment.

"Ah, he knows how many blue beans make five," said the carter, as he took out the peg by which the folding doors were kept closed.

"I don't feel quite so sure about the footsteps," remarked the policeman; "they don't appear to me to tally with the others."

"If I'm mistaken, we shall have to try back," answered Jarvis. "Of course, it is just possible we are on a false scent. Ah! what is this?" The speaker pointed significantly to some drops of blood upon the straw in front of the barn. "What say you to that?"

"Blood, without a doubt," observed the constable.

"That's where they laid him down when they opened the barn door."

"Ah!—dare say—most likely."

The villagers were open-mouthed with wonder. They, one and all, voted the soldier a necromancer.

The doors were flung wide open, and they sprang over the rack into the body of the barn. There had been some threshing done the day before, and there was a vast heap of chaff just outside.

While they were gazing around, a low moan, as of one in pain, fell upon their ears.

"Keep quiet, lads," exclaimed Jarvis; "leave this matter to me and the constable. Keep where you are. We can none of us tell what next will happen."

"Here's footmarks on the chaff, and blood on it also," said the constable, who took a few steps farther inside, whereupon his eyes lighted on the prostrate figure of a man lying in the corner on a heap of straw.

He flashed his bull's-eye on the face of the wounded burglar, and uttered an exclamation of surprise.

The Bristol Badger lay helpless, and bathed in blood.

Jane Ryan, who had followed the constable and Jarvis, gave a slight scream.

"Don't take on so, woman," said the constable. "He's only got his deserts."

Heedless of this observation, Jane went close to the wounded burglar and peered into his face.

"Dost know who this here is? I'll tell ye!" she exclaimed, in a voice of concentrated rage; "he's the murderer of my sweetheart. I should ha' known him out o' ten thousand."

There was a murmur of unmixed surprise at this observation.

"What beest thee saying, Jane?" said the farmer, scratching his head. "Hast ever seen 'im afore?"

"Ay, sure enough I have, master. It was not for nothing that I sat up this night. I knew summat was about to happen, but never guessed it would turn out like this."

Gregson endeavoured to rise to his feet, but the attempt was a futile one; he was too weak from loss of blood.

"What has that false, wicked woman been saying?" he inquired of the policeman.

"She accuses you of murder," was the brief rejoinder.

"She's mad. I never saw her before."

"What's to be done wi' this man?" inquired the farmer of the constable.

"He's my prisoner, anyway," answered the latter. "Best see and have his wounds attended to, and then we will take him to the lock-up. You charge him, I suppose?"

"Yes, with burglary."

"Attempted burglary," chimed in the cracksman.

"And I charge him with wilful murder!" exclaimed Jane Ryan.

A hurdle was brought by some of the villagers, and upon this the ill-fated Badger was placed; he was then carried into the farm-house, not, however, before the constable had taken the precaution to handcuff him, for he was known to that astute officer as a ruffian of no common order. He was, however, run to earth, having been, in a manner of speaking, hunted down by a woman.

A doctor was sent for, who bandaged his wound, which, although severe, was not likely to prove mortal—certainly not unless some unfavourable symptoms set in.

While all this had been going on, Charles Peace had contrived to conceal himself in a neighbouring coppice, from which he durst not emerge while the village folk were prowling about.

When Gregson was conveyed into the house the majority of the villagers wheeled off; at the same time Jarvis, however, was still endeavouring to trace out the Badger's companions. He came too near to the coppice where Peace was concealed to be at all pleasant to a gentleman of his retiring habits, so Peace was fain to avail himself of a neighbouring hedge, on the other side of which he crept along on all fours.

Having gone some considerable distance by this means of progression, he imagined that he was out of sight, and betook himself to the open field, across which he ran at the top of his speed. His movements were, however, not unobserved by Jarvis.

The latter caught Mr. John Ashbrook by the leg—the farmer was mounted on his bay mare—and said, "There goes one of them; ride down the lane and intercept his flight, while I run across the field. We shall have him yet."

The farmer needed no second bidding. He rode at the hedge which skirted the lane. With one stroke from the long corded whip, and one cry from the rider's lips, the gallant animal bounded over the hedge like a flying deer.

"Wouldn't 'a brushed a fly off the top twig," exclaimed Ashbrook triumphantly. "Now for my gentleman. Dall it, if this won't turn out an eventful night, especially if I catch that rascal."

While the farmer was riding down the lane, Jarvis and several others were in hot pursuit of the fugitive.

Peace became aware, much to his discomfiture, that every movement he made was plainly visible to his pursuers, and he deeply regretted having taken to the open field.

He ran his hardest, and had the satisfaction of getting into the lane before any of the pursuing party had even reached the field

Ashbrook, as he was trotting down the lane, saw the fugitive jump through a gap in the hedge. The farmer urged on his steed, being now under the full impression that the capture of Peace was reduced to a certainty.

In a brief space of time he came within a hundred yards of the enemy.

"I've got him now!" exclaimed the farmer. "He's mine, as sure as my name's Jack Ashbrook!"

But there's an old adage "that it is as well not to reckon your chickens before they are hatched."

Peace was in imminent danger, but he was an astute, cunning rascal, who was up to every feint and dodge in all cases of emergency. He, nevertheless, was fully impressed with the fact that matters were growing serious—much too serious to be pleasant. He turned round and boldly faced the horseman.

Drawing a revolver from his pocket, he watched till Ashbrook came within range of the shot, then he fired. At this time he could not have been more than twenty paces from the horse and its rider.

A bullet was lodged in Mr. Ashbrook's right shoulder. The wound was not a very serious one certainly—not enough to place the farmer hors de combat, but the effects of the shot proved more disastrous in another way.

The mare, who was a high-spirited animal, became restive from the pistol's flash She reared, then stumbled, and threw her rider heavily to the ground. Peace rushed forward and struck Ashbrook two blows on the head, which produced insensibility.

He then made for the mare's head. Turning her sharply round, he led her some paces from the scene of action. He patted her on the neck and strove as best he could to overcome the effects of the fright caused by the flash of his weapon. The mare became comparatively quiet and tractable.

Peace jumped on her back and rode off at headlong speed.

While all this had been taking place in the lane the mob of persons in the field had increased considerably in numbers; but the foremost of them were a long way from that part of the lane where the short but decisive struggle had taken place.

Two other horses had been brought out from the stables at Oakfield, but some time necessarily elapsed before they could be saddled; and when Mr. Cheadle and Mr. Jamblin mounted them for the purpose of giving chase, Peace was so far ahead that the chances were remote of finding him.

He knew the by-roads of the neighbourhood perfectly well, and took very excellent care to choose a circuitous route. As he was riding along he listened every now and then to ascertain if there were any sounds of horses' hoofs to be heard, but none were as yet audible. He felicitated himself upon this fact, arguing therefrom that his pursuers had gone another road.

"I shall give them the double; they are on the wrong scent," he ejaculated, in a tone of satisfaction; "but even when the worst comes to the worst, all that will be left for me will be to make a stout fight for it."

He had unlimited faith in his own power, skill, and address in confronting and overcoming difficulties; and his confidence did not desert him on this occasion.

Presently he came to three cross-roads, and was hesitating which to take—calculating the while the chances of detection with his accustomed coolness.

While thus engaged he descried a mounted patrol on a formidable-looking horse, coming at a measured pace towards him.

To turn and fly was his first impulse, but upon second

consideration he thought it better to put a bold face on the matter.

The mounted policeman came forward, and regarded him with a look of doubt and mistrust.

"Good morning, friend," said Peace, in a cheery tone. "Better weather than it was a few hours ago."

"Yes," returned the other. "Where might you be journeying to this early hour?"

The speaker regarded him with a searching glance. This, however, did not in any way discompose Peace, who, throughout his career, plumed himself upon being able to throw dust in the eyes of the constabulary.

"Ah, I'm sorry to say my errand, or, rather, the cause of it, is one of a painful nature. A poor gentleman is at death's door, and I have been sent off for the doctor. In cases of this sort minutes are precious. Let me see, yonder's the nearest way to Hull, isn't it?"

"Yes, the right-hand one. But who is in such extreme danger?"

"A farmer—Mr. Ashbrook. Poor fellow, it is a chance if he recovers, so they seem to think."

"I know both the Mr. Ashbrooks perfectly well. Which one is it that's so bad; they were right enough yesterday?"

"Mr. John Ashbrook."

"Umph! that's strange. What's the matter with Mr. John?"

"He was thrown—horse reared and fell upon him. His injuries are very serious."

"I'm sorry to hear this, but"—and here the speaker regarded Peace with a still more searching look—"it's his horse you are riding."

"Yes, that's right enough; it is."

"Then who are you going for?"

"Dr. Gardiner."

While this conversation was taking place Peace had so distorted his features that recognition was almost impossible. He was an adept at this. By constant practice he was enabled to throw out his under jaw, lift up his eyebrows, and so alter the expression of his features that he defied detection. This is now pretty generally acknowledged.

"Well, I must not let anyone detain me very long in a case like this," he observed carelessly. "So, farewell for the present."

The patrol made no reply. He did not, however, feel quite satisfied that all was quite right; at the same time he did not consider it his duty to offer any obstacle to Peace's passage along the road, which led directly to the town of Hull.

Peace trotted along till the patrol was lost to sight, then he pulled the bridle rein of the mare, and turned her into a narrow lane, which ran at right-angles with the road.

"That fellow suspects something," he murmured; "and for two pins he would have collared me there and then. The sooner I part company with the mare the better it will be for both of us. I'm thinking."

He dismounted, opened a gate which was at the corner of a meadow, and led the mare into the field; then he took off the saddle and bridle, which he threw into a ditch, gave the animal a sharp crack with his whip, shut the gate, and left her to herself. This done, he proceeded merrily along on foot.

PEACE RUSHED FORWARD AND STRUCK ASHBROOK TWO BLOWS ON THE HEAD

Messrs. Cheadle and Jamblin had meanwhile been riding to their hearts' content, but they did not catch the most distant glance of the man of whom they were in search. No wonder, seeing that they had lost all traces of the fugitive, and had been journeying in an opposite, or very nearly in an opposite, direction to the one taken by Peace. They had, therefore, the gratification of riding many miles upon a bootless errand.

They returned, vexed and dispirited, to Oakfield House, where they found John Ashbrook in bed, with his sister and the village surgeon in close attendance upon him.

The latter had extracted the bullet and strapped up the head of the sufferer, who was, he said, doing as well as could be expected. Certainly there was no immediate danger.

The farmer had an unimpaired constitution, and, although sadly bruised and knocked about, would in all probability soon get the better of his wounds.

Peace, when he came to the end of the lane, turned into

a road, where stood a small beerhouse, of a primitive character, with a good dry skittle-ground at the back.

He knocked several times at the side door of this establishment, but received no answer to his repeated summonses. It was evident that all were asleep within.

He called the landlord by name, with no better result. While thus engaged, a man came forward from the opposite side of the road, and said:

"Why, what's up now, Charley? Want to get in?"

Peace turned round in some alarm, but was a little reassured upon finding the speaker was a friend of his.

"Hang it! I'm as tired as a dog, and wanted an hour or two's rest," said Peace.

"Tired! Where have you been to?"

"Playing the fiddle to a party some miles away from here. They could not accommodate me with a shakedown, so I've had to trudge it."

"Come along wi' me, my lad!" said the good-natured groom. "You shall have an hour or two's rest in my little crib over the stable."

Peace gladly availed himself of his friend's offer.

A hue and cry would be raised throughout the neighbourhood of the attempted burglary at Oakfield House and the surrounding districts, and Peace, young as he was at this time—he had only just turned twenty—was fully impressed with the necessity of using caution.

No one would dream of his being in the groom's sleeping apartment. The latter informed him that he had to take the carriage up to London, and that he should not return from the metropolis for several days.

"But that ain't no kind o' consequence," said the groom. "You can sleep away to your heart's content, only when you do leave mind and lock the door. You can give the key to the stable-boy."

"I'm sure I do not know how to sufficiently thank you, Jim," observed Peace, in his blandest tone and manner.

"There's no call for thanks, lad. You've done me a good turn afore now, and one good turn deserves another."

Peace was conducted by his companion into the small sleeping chamber.

"There you are," said the latter, pointing to the bed. "In less than half an hour I shall be at the station; make yourself comfortable. We shan't meet again for some days, that's quite certain, and so good-bye for the present."

"Good-bye, Jim, and many thanks."

Then, as the man was about to pass out, Peace said quietly:

"Oh, by the way, there is no occasion for you to say you have seen me, or, indeed, I've been here. It's a little private matter I've been about. You understand."

"A nod's as good as a wink to a blind horse," returned the other, with a chuckle. "No one will know anything from me, Charlie."

After the departure of his friend Peace was too disturbed in his mind to sleep. He watched from the little window of his dormitory the carriage and pair, driven towards the railway station by his friend, the groom.

When the vehicle was lost to sight, he walked towards the door, took the key out of the lock, and fastened the door on the inside. In a few minutes after this he stretched himself on the bed and sank into a deep sleep—the village clock had struck eleven before he awoke.

He now began to consider his course of action; he felt perfectly secure from observation in his present quarters. No one would for a moment imagine that he was safely ensconced in one of the apartments of the stables adjoining a gentleman's house.

He thought it best to watch and wait; it would not do to be too precipitate; in the dusk of the evening he might creep out and get clear off.

He found in the groom's bedroom some bread and cold meat, which served him for a meal, and he prepared himself to pass the lonely hours as best he could. The day wore tediously enough, but the longest day must have an end. And when the grey mists of evening began to encircle the objects seen before so distinctly from the window, Charles Peace prepared to take his departure.

He disguised himself in so complete a manner as to almost defy detection. He made himself up as a hawker. He took the precaution to always carry a hawker's licence, made out in a fictitious name; the licence itself, however, was genuine enough.

He heard, as he descended the creaking stairs, the boy whistling in the stable. Agreeably to the directions he had received, he handed the key to the lad, at the same time dropping a shilling in his hand.

The lad stared with astonishment, which was not unmixed with alarm.

A few words from Peace soon reassured him.

"But ye've been 'nation quiet all the day though," said the lad, with a broad grin.

"People generally are quiet when they are asleep, my lad," was the ready rejoinder.

"Ugh! 'spose so."

Peace did not want to have further parley. His purpose was served, and he, therefore, proceeded on his journey.

CHAPTER IV.

The most celebrated cracksman of his day, Ned Gregson, alias the Bristol Badger, was certainly the least fortunate of the three ruffians who contrived to effect an entrance into Oakfield House. He was run to earth. After he had been carried on the hurdle into the farmhouse, the village surgeon made a superficial examination of his wound, which was of a fearful nature; the whole of the charge from the gun fired by Jane Ryan had entered the burglar's chest, and the loss of blood was enormous. The only wonder was that Gregson had not been killed outright; but he was not the sort of man to be so easily disposed of. As far as physical strength was concerned he was a perfect giant; this he had proved on many occasions.

He was more than double the age of Peace, with three times his strength. Nevertheless, as far as the guilty and lawless lives of the two men were concerned, there was not much difference between them; they were both criminals of the worst type, their whole career being one of profligacy and crime.

Gregson was taken away to the lock-up in charge of the constabulary, who procured an ambulance from the hospital. The divisional surgeon was sent for; every care was taken of the prisoner; and all that skill and attention could do to preserve so valuable a life as the burglar's was, as is usual in such cases, not wanting.

When sufficiently recovered, Gregson was examined before the county magistrates. The facts deposed to were plain enough, and the prisoner was committed for trial upon two distinct charges—namely, murder and burglary.

Mr. John Ashbrook had by this time sufficiently regained his strength to leave his room and look after his farming stock, but he was not as yet up to his usual form.

"This extraordinary charge of murder," said the farmer to Jane, one afternoon, as he reclined upon the sofa in the front parlour, "seems just like a romance. Strange that you should have recognised the ruffian by the pistol's flash on that eventful night."

"I should have known him out of ten thousand. His face was as familiar to me as if I had seen him but yesterday."

"Tell us all about it, Jane."

"Well, master, it's a sad and sorrowful tale, which I have kept locked up in my own breast for ever so long, but it is but right you should know all about it."

"Right, lass, right you are; go on. What made you imagine that the house was likely to be attacked? You asked me to load the other two guns."

"I did, because I felt assured that danger was at hand."

"Why so?"

"I had a dream—twice I dreamt the same thing—and then I went over to Mother Crowther and consulted her. She can read the future—being—being a wise woman."

"She is a wise woman indeed if she can do that," remarked the farmer, with a smile; "what did she say?"

"She consulted a book, cast my nativity, and told me that in less than three days I should see here or hereabouts the murderer of James Hopgood."

"And who might he be?"

"He is dead now; he was my sweetheart," answered Jane, hanging down her head.

"Ah, your sweetheart, eh?"

"Yes; before I came here I lived at Squire Gordon's. A kinder master never lived. James Hopgood was a carpenter by trade; he had been doing some work for the squire, building some outhouses, and while the work was going on he slept in the house."

"How long ago was this?"

"Well, it must be nearly six years."

"You've been here over four."

"That's true. Indeed, it must be more than six years. I cannot say to a certainty; but they've got the date—the p'lice have."

"No, matter, that's quite near enough—six years or a little more. What happened then?"

"I will describe all to you, just as it occurred. James Hopgood was in the kitchen; he and Mary, my fellow-servant, were having supper together. I was in the back kitchen, when all of a sudden we heard a scuffle in the passage, and my master cried, 'Murder!' James rushed past me, and flew up the kitchen stairs. Then we heard a heavy fall in the passage; this was followed by some low moans. I went up to see what was the matter, and found my master stretched on the floor of the passage, with blood flowing from a wound in his left temple. I endeavoured to raise him, but was unable to do so. He was a stout, heavy man, and I had not strength enough to lift him."

"Was he killed?"

"No—oh, dear no; he recovered afterwards. But the worst remains to be told. Oh, master, these be tears that are a-flowin' from my eyes. I can see it all now, as if it occurred but yesterday."

"Indeed, I have; but, waking or sleeping, one burning thought has been in my brain. It is this—to avenge the death of my dear and true-hearted James."

The farmer was bewildered—partly dazed by the fearful tale he had been listening to. He turned his eyes towards his sister, who had crept into the room to listen to the appalling narrative.

"Did you know of this?" inquired Ashbrook.

"I knew a shocking affair of some sort took place at Squire's Gordon's when Jane was there, but I never knew till now its precise nature. I understood that some young man was murdered—that is all. How and by whom I was never told."

"And was the man never discovered? An attempt was made to find him, I s'pose?" asked the farmer of his servant.

"Government offered a reward of a hundred pounds; a description of the man was printed on handbills, which were sent, so they said, to every police-station."

"With what result?"

"WHY, WHAT'S UP NOW, CHARLEY? WANT TO GET IN?"

"Yes; your master, the squire, you found him senseless. There's no hurry, girl, take your time; don't flurry yourself."

"While I was looking at my poor master I caught sight of James Hopgood and the burglar—him as I shot down in the big bedroom. James had closed with the ruffian, who, as far as I could judge, was striving to shake James off; but he was not able to do this so easily; they wrestled like two serpents. I felt sick and faint, but, notwithstanding, I had sufficient strength left to hasten to young Hopgood's assistance. I saw the flash of an open knife in the pale moonlight, saw the gleaming of the desperate wretch's eyes, and in another moment the knife was buried up to the hilt in James's breast. He fell with a deep groan, and never stirred hand or foot afterwards.

"I rushed forward and caught his murderer by the handkerchief which encircled his throat. After this I lost all consciousness. When I came to I found myself on the wet grass of the lawn—the ruffian's handkerchief was firmly grasped in my right hand."

"Why, Jane, my girl, this is indeed a horrible story, and have you kept this all to yourself for these last six years?"

"With none, except the arrest of a poor harmless fellow, who never set foot in the squire's house, and who had no more to do with the crime than you or I have."

"And the handkerchief?"

"That I have kept. The knife also with which the murder was committed was picked up on the lawn; that, too, I have preserved. They are both now in the possession of the p'lice. Ah! we shall bring it home to the deep-dyed villain. I felt certain that, sooner or later, he would be caught, the murderin' thief."

"What became of the squire?"

"He left England for good, and settled in Brittany. He has a daughter who is married there."

"Is he still alive?"

"I believe so. I never heard of his death—oh! I'm pretty sure he's alive."

"Do you think he could identify the man?"

"He told me after his recovery that he saw his features distinctly, and that he would be able to swear to him. It appeared that Gregson was making his escape from the house with the things he had stolen, when he was suddenly and unexpectedly confronted by the squire, who had come

over the fields, crossed the lawn, and entered by the back door of his residence."

"We've all of us had a narrow escape," said Maude Ashbrook, "and it will be a warning to us for the future."

"I'm glad Jane shot the fellow down," observed the farmer. "She's a true-hearted, brave girl—not, mind ye, but it would ha' bin better for him to have fallen by the hands of one of us men."

"No, master, no," cried Jane, in a deprecating tone. "I am the most deeply injured, sick and sore of heart—I who have sworn to devote the remainder of my life to discover the slayer of James Hopgood—I was the most fitting person to hunt him down. It has been done, and he will not escape now."

Jane had given her evidence before the stipendiary magistrates in the clearest and most lucid manner. She swore positively to the prisoner Gregson, whose features she declared had not changed since she saw them so distinctly on that fatal night. Her fellow-servant also identified the prisoner, whom she saw, so she averred, through the back-parlour window at the time Jane had hold of him by the handkerchief.

He was also recognised by several of the police as a well-known burglar who had been convicted several times.

Gregson, who was about as hardened a ruffian as it was possible to conceive, knew and felt that his game was up; nevertheless he clung to the hope, as most criminals do of his class, that he might escape the last dread sentence of the law—perhaps his life might be spared.

He was taken to Broxwell Gaol; his custodians conducted him through the lodge, then he passed through a square with a green plot of grass in the middle, encircled by a gravel walk. It was like a college quadrangle.

Gregson looked at the grass and the turnkeys who came out to meet him. He was conducted up a flight of stone steps, and one of the turnkeys who had joined him and the constabulary who had him under their charge tapped at a thick oak door, which was covered with iron nails and secured with a gigantic lock.

They were admitted immediately into a little room, which was almost entirely filled by a clerk's desk and stool.

Upon this stool was seated an old man, with a pair of iron-rimmed spectacles on his nose, making entries in an account-book.

The turnkey who had opened the door to them now closed it with an ominous sound.

The key clanked loudly in the lock.

The Bristol Badger was in prison.

The turnkey unlocked another door and disappeared. In a few moments he returned, dismissed the constable, and ordered the prisoner to follow him.

They entered a snow-white corridor, which was lined with iron doors, and above with galleries, also of iron, bright and polished.

Gregson was placed in a cell, for some time in the company of a single turnkey, who stood by him, rigid and voiceless as a statue, watchful as a lynx.

The "cracksman" assumed an air of dejection, and kept his eyes fixed upon the ground.

He had only partially recovered from his wound. From this a vast number of shots had been extracted; but several more, it was thought, still remained in the flesh.

The burning pain in his chest had not entirely left him, although it was not nearly so insupportable as at first.

Presently the door of the cell opened, and a gentleman in plain clothes came in. He had a ruddy complexion, with a brown moustache and beard.

Gregson recognised him immediately. He was the governor.

The recognition was mutual.

"So," he said, "you have come here again?"

"They've brought me here," muttered the cracksman.

"Precisely. Of course you know the usual forms prescribed by the authorities. We must put you through the ordeal of a warm bath.

"Turn on the tap, Wilson," said the governor; and in a few minutes the bath was filled with hot water.

They took off his handcuffs, and then stood by him as he undressed.

"Do you know, governor, that I've been wounded—well-nigh unto death? It's too bad to put a cove in hot water in my state."

"Wounded, eh? We'll send for the doctor."

The prison surgeon was brought into the room.

He glanced at the wound, which still presented a serious appearance.

"The bath won't hurt you. There is no necessity for you to immerse your chest or shoulders in the water. In my opinion you will be better for it."

"All right," returned Gregson; "you shall have your way. I'm not one to make things disagreeable."

And forthwith he jumped in.

The governor paced the corridor for the next ten minutes or so under the pretence of superintending the arrangements of the prisoners' dinners, which ascended from the kitchen on a great tray by means of mysterious machinery.

On his return he called another turnkey, and ordered him to have the prisoner's clothes brushed and cleaned.

"You have got plenty of money," he said to Gregson. "You are suffering from a severe wound. We don't wish to deal harshly with you."

"I'm much obliged, I'm sure," returned the Badger.

The governor took no notice of this last observation, which, to say the truth, was half conciliatory, half sarcastic.

"We will therefore allow you to wear your own clothes, and to procure your own meals from an eating-house, if you prefer it."

"Yes, I do prefer it, if it makes no difference."

"So be it, then. You will see by the printed copy of the rules which is hung up in every cell that you are not allowed more than one pint of wine or one quart of malt liquor daily, and that, if you undertake to board yourself, you must do so altogether. Besides this you will be allowed books to read and paper to write upon, and other little comforts, under my supervision, as I have no desire to treat you with unnecessary severity during the brief period that will elapse while you are awaiting your trial. I hope you will conduct yourself in a proper and becoming manner."

The cracksman nodded, and seemed by his demeanour to appreciate the lenity which the governor displayed.

"You are very good, sir, I'm sure," he muttered. "I wish all gentlemen in your position were equally kind and merciful."

The governor bowed in a dignified manner, and then left the cell. The turnkey returned with Gregson's clothes, and stood by him as he dressed. He was then conducted to Cell No. 15.

There they showed him how to ring the bell, how to pull the slide from the grating when he wanted fresh air, and how to manage the water taps and the bed furniture. They also informed him that when he wanted anything from the town there was a prison servant attached to the establishment whose office it was to run errands for the prisoners who were waiting for trial.

The turnkeys made these explanations with a courteous accent, for turnkeys have a sort of veneration for great criminals. And Ned Gregson, in this respect, was a man of mark.

The prison officials went out of the cell backwards, as if they were retiring from a royal presence; they locked the door with an ostentatious noise that they might thereby strike a wholesome awe into the mind of their prisoner.

Gregson sat himself down upon the wooden stool in his cell without moving. The bitterness of his thoughts it would not be so easy to describe.

He remembered with harrowing distinctness the most remote incident of the night upon which the ill-fated James Hopgood fell beneath the fatal blow.

"And that cursed woman!" ejaculated the Badger. "Who would have dreamt of her being an inmate of the farmhouse? And the oily-tongued Peace, he has got clear off, I'll dare be sworn; and the chances are that he is now playing that old fiddle of his—whilst I—I——"

Here he uttered an impious oath, and then lapsed into silence again. He sat for two hours a prey to the most agonising thoughts. At the expiration of that time he uttered curses loud and deep. He ran frantically round his narrow cell.

One of the turnkeys opened the door, and told him that he must make less noise. There was a punishment for making an outcry of that nature, and he pointed to one of the printed rules.

The "cracksman" answered with a howl of rage, and squatted abjectly on his stone floor.

The turnkey, who was pretty well used to scenes of this nature, and who, therefore, made due allowance, repeated his warning and shut the door.

Soon after this the prison servant brought a wooden tray in. There were two dishes, each surmounted by a pewter cover. One contained three slices of roast mutton, floating in lukewarm gravy; the other contained four good-sized potatoes.

Gregson, who was still on the floor, looked at them with indifference.

"Governor thought you would like a little dinner," said the man kindly; and he propped up a slab which was hanging from the wall, placed the tray on it, reached down a salt dish from a shelf in the corner, where it had grown dusty, in company with a bible and two hymn books.

"Will you take beer or wine?"

"I want wine," said the Badger sulkily.

"Very good, I will bring you a pint; it's against the rules to have any more."

He drank some of the eating-house sherry, which, bad as it was, encouraged him to eat a few mouthfuls. This awoke him from the stupor into which he had fallen, and which had been almost akin to madness.

CHAPTER V.

Leaving the guilty man to his reflections, we will now return to the hero of our story.

Charles Peace, after he left the groom's little bedroom, succeeded in getting clear out of the neighbourhood without attracting any observation.

As he trudged along he reflected that it would be advisable not to return to Hull. The hue and cry raised in consequence of the events already described would reach Hull, and search would be made by the police in that town.

What had become of Cooney, Peace had not the remotest idea. Whether he had escaped or been captured it was not possible for him to say; neither did he concern himself much about the fate of the tinker. In cases of this sort he felt that self-preservation was the first law of nature.

As he was proceeding along he was overtaken by a covered cart. He persuaded the driver thereof to give him a lift on the road. By this means he managed to get many miles on his journey. Having made up his mind to take up his quarters at Bradford, he, on the first opportunity, took the train to that town. He was acquainted with a girl at Bradford, who was, to a certain extent, attached to him. She was a mill-hand. She was possessed of a considerable share of personal attractions.

It was evening when Peace arrived at Bradford, and in the streets were throngs of persons. The factory hands had knocked off work; some were hastening homewards, others were making for some favourite house of entertainment, and groups of inveterate gossips were to be seen in various parts of the town.

Peace walked jauntily along one of the main streets. Having threaded this, he turned round and retraced his steps. He seemed to be wandering about in a desultory way.

A group of girls emerged from a turning out of the street. Three peals of laughter proved that they were in a merry mood. One of the girls came suddenly forward, and struck Peace in a familiar manner on the shoulder.

"What! Charlie?" she ejaculated, in a tone of surprise and delight. "Who would have thought of seeing you at Bradford?"

"Bessie dear," said Peace, "don't talk so loud; I've not been in the town half an hour, and——"

"What brought you here?"

"I came to see you, my charmer."

The girl made a grimace—she didn't quite believe what he said, but, nevertheless, felt flattered.

Although one of the working class, she was very beautiful—her features being delicately chiselled, and her form being cast in one of nature's choicest moulds; for the rest she was giddy, thoughtless, and her morals were not of the highest order. Her name was Bessie Dalton.

"And your mother?" inquired the girl.

"I left her at Hull," returned her companion.

The two walked on in close converse for some time. They passed through several streets, and eventually arrived at an unpretending-looking house, where Bessie lived.

They both entered, and Peace was introduced to the landlord, and took one of the furnished rooms, which were let out to workpeople. He had a tolerably fair share of money, which would suffice for his immediate wants; and in the course of a few days he succeeded in getting some odd jobs in picture framing. In the evening he contrived to pick up a few shillings by playing the violin at some of the houses of public entertainment.

He was a man who could make himself agreeable enough when it answered his purpose to do so. He was in no way deficient in conversational powers; was tolerably well informed upon most subjects, and generally ingratiated himself in the good graces of most persons with whom he came in contact.

To a certain extent the girl Bessie Dalton, was proud of him. He was far ahead in many ways of the working population of Bradford, who, one and all, voted him a right good fellow.

For a short time he led a tolerably quiet life.

But it was not in his nature to earn a respectable living for long without having recourse to his evil courses.

He became straitened in circumstances, and once more he essayed to replenish his exchequer by his midnight excursions.

Since the disastrous affair at Oakfield House he had made up his mind to carry on business on his own account.

He would have no accomplices. None should know of his depredations save the girl Bessie, in whom he had implicit confidence.

And it is but justice to her to note that whatever may have been her faults, she never betrayed Charles Peace.

He was for the first time made up as a one-armed man. He had for a long time contemplated disguising himself in this way, and the better to carry out his purpose had moulded a piece of gutta-percha, to which a hook was attached, his hand, when drawn up, fitting into the socket of the gutta-percha.

When this instrument—if it can be so termed—was on no person in the world would have guessed that he was anything else but a one-armed man.

Disguising himself after this fashion, and staining his face so as to represent a mulatto, he one night started upon one of his lawless expeditions.

He passed quickly out of the town of Bradford, and made direct for a small but handsomely-built house, just on the outskirts of Dudley Hill.

The house, which was built of stone, with bay windows and a handsome portico in front, was in the occupation of a wealthy gentleman, who was a retired mill-owner.

Shrewdly guessing that a pretty considerable amount of movable property would be found within this habitation, Peace had determined to pay it a visit.

Upon his arrival in front of the house, he opened the garden-gate with a skeleton-key, closed it again, and began to mature his plan of operation.

There was a garden in the front and rear of the villa, which stood by itself on the brow of the hill. No other habitation was near it—certainly none within a quarter of a mile.

Peace deftly climbed up to the balcony which stood in front of the first floor window. This balcony was half filled with evergreens, and these completely concealed him from any chance passenger—not, indeed, that there was a single living person to be seen abroad save himself.

The windows were what is termed French ones; they opened in the centre, and swung back on hinges, like folding doors. He had not much difficulty in lifting the bottom bolt of these, the top one had not been pushed into its socket.

He had now to operate upon the shutters; these were fastened by an iron bar, which ran across them.

Stooping down so as to conceal himself behind the evergreens, he began to bore holes in the shutters with a small centre-bit. After working industriously, but at the same time as noiselessly as possible, for some little time, he succeeded in making an aperture in one of the shutters sufficiently large for his hand to pass through. He then lifted up the bar and pushed open the shutters.

In another moment he was in the first floor front room. He wore at this time women's cloth boots, over which were goloshes, also women's, so that his footsteps were as noiseless as a cat's.

He carefully closed the shutters after he had effected an entrance. Then he began, by the aid of his dark lantern, to make an inspection of the apartment, which was sumptuously furnished. It contained plate and valuables, which must be worth a considerable amount.

Peace opened cupboards and drawers. In one of the last-named he found a bag of gold and a roll of banknotes. An elegantly-wrought silver cup, presented to the mill-owner by his workpeople, shared the same fate as the other articles; and, taken altogether, the valuables abstracted from this one room were a rich booty for the most rapacious mercenary burglar.

Peace was, however, hungering for more. He passed out of the front room and gently opened the door of the back. All was still. He entered; when, to his infinite astonishment, he found it tenanted.

He stood transfixed with wonderment. On a couch, the head of which was near the window, was stretched a young female of such surpassing loveliness that even the callous heart of the burglar was touched.

The pale moonlight streamed through the lace curtains and revealed a picture upon which the burglar gazed with fascinated eyes.

The young maiden was in a deep slumber, her head was thrown back, resting on one exquisitely-formed arm, a long tress of glossy brown hair fell over her partially-revealed bosom, and the moist, ruddy lips were parted, disclosing the pearly teeth.

The pose of the figure was perfect, and if there ever was a living personification of the "Sleeping Beauty" most assuredly the lovely maiden, who moved the senses of the burglar to wonder and delight, was that one.

Peace was spellbound—he had never beheld in his life anything so matchless, so surpassingly beautiful.

He stood speechless and immovable with admiration.

The power of volition seemed to have entirely forsaken him. His eyes were riveted on the couch upon which the young creature reclined.

The room was furnished with all the appliances which wealth could supply, or taste could suggest. Every piece of furniture in that elegant apartment was of the choicest and rarest manufacture. It seemed to the entranced eyes of the robber to be the personification of a Paphian bower—at once bewitching, poetic, and almost fabulous.

On the mantelpiece was a small clock of rare workmanship. This elegant timepiece was set with jewels, which sparkled and scintillated beneath the rays of his lantern.

Each picture that hung upon the walls was a perfect gem. The chairs were covered with brocaded silk, and the articles of virtu observable in almost every part of the bedchamber were too numerous to particularise. It will suffice to note that they served to make up an ensemble perfectly unique.

But all these things paled before the lustre and beauty of the sleeper.

Charles Peace was touched. He longed to clasp in his arms the fair maiden who was slumbering so tranquilly.

He had, whilst gazing on her, almost forgotten the purport of his visit to the mill-owner's villa; but was in a measure reminded of the same when he looked at the various articles in the room.

Creeping forward, he sought to gain possession of the gold watch on its stand by the toilette-table. He moved forward a step or two, but suddenly became motionless again, as the sleeper heaved a soft sigh and shifted slightly her position.

The heart of the burglar beat audibly.

He hesitated how to act. Grasping with his right hand the revolver he invariably carried with him, he watched the maiden with the eyes of a lynx.

Not that he meant doing her any harm. He hardly knew what he meant. For a time he was subdued, but the greed of gain returned to him, and he placed his hand upon the watch.

"No," he murmured, after a pause, "I will take nothing of hers—nothing.

"I am well repaid by looking at one so lovely."

He withdrew his hand from the watch and retreated some two or three steps backwards towards the door of the room.

Then he became immovable again.

"This will never do," he muttered. "If I go on like this I shall run the chance of being discovered; and how then? No, I must away at once, and yet, hang it, she is so very beautiful!"

He again riveted his eyes on the form of the sleeper, upon which he once or twice cast the rays of his lantern.

"I'm a weak, silly fool to be overcome thus—an idiot. Bah! there must be an end to it."

He turned round and crept through the half-opened door. Down the stairs, with faltering steps, he then proceeded. He entered the front parlour, and then the back. He stripped them of as many valuables as he could conveniently carry, and then passed out of the house by the back door.

All this had been done without his disturbing anyone.

Taking his way along the garden, he passed out into the high road. Not a soul was to be seen. The night was clear and bright, and he walked on for a good half-mile. Upon arriving at the end of a lane which ran out of the road he halted, looking the while to the right and left.

He saw the back of a policeman going down the lane, and prudence dictated that he should go in the opposite direction.

He walked on with rapid strides, and succeeded in reaching his lodgings at Bradford. Having let himself in with a latch-key, he made direct for his own little room without disturbing anyone.

Peace had several orders on hand for picture-framing, and for the next two or three days after the burglary near Dudley Hill he worked industriously at his trade—if we can bring ourselves to consider that to be his legitimate occupation.

The booty he had obtained from the millowner he, of course, carefully concealed. He had already changed one of the notes in a quarter where there was not much fear of detection.

While working at his trade, in a shed at the bottom of the yard of the house in which he had taken up his quarters, he was surprised at seeing a stranger enter the yard in company with Bessie Dalton.

"A friend of mine," said the latter, introducing her companion to Peace. "He is on a charitable expedition. A poor fellow was severely injured at Ludlow's mill, and he has since died. His wife and two children are in the greatest distress. My friend is getting up a subscription for his widow."

"Very creditable of you, I'm sure," remarked Peace, turning towards the stranger. "I am but a working-man myself, as you see, but I will willingly give my mite."

Peace put his hand in his pocket, and gave the man five shillings.

"I can't afford much, but what I can spare you are welcome to," remarked the burglar. "Totally unprovided for—are they? All these things are sad, very sad. What does the widow purpose doing?"

"Well, I must tell you that the little sum subscribed, whatever it may be, will be applied to meet her immediate wants. After then we shall endeavour to raise a sum sufficient to set her up in business—some little shop, perhaps. Her husband's employers have promised their assistance, and Mr. Knight, the organist at the church, has promised his services at a benefit concert we thought of giving."

"And I'm sure, Charlie, you will have no objection to give your services," added Bessie.

"In what way?"

"Well, of course, I mean in the way of music. You can play the violin, you know."

"Would you have any objection?" said the stranger.

"Not the slightest. If my services are of any use you may command me."

"I will not detain you, Mr. Peace. Allow me to return you my most sincere thanks. I shall have the pleasure of seeing you again in a day or two."

The speaker offered his hand to the burglar; there was the usual interchange of courtesies, and the stranger took his departure.

"You ought to make something out of this, Charlie," said Bessie Dalton.

"How so?" returned Peace; "I am to give my services gratuitously."

"True; but it will be the means of introducing you to a lot of swells and rich people, whom you can afterwards call upon and leave your card. You see I've an eye to business, old man."

"Oh, yes, certainly, there's some use in that. Some of them may want pictures framed."

"You should have a shop of your own."

"Maybe I shall after a bit—that is, if I settle in Bradford."

"You are not going to leave us again?" said the girl fondly. "What should I do without you, Charlie?"

"Do as others do," returned Peace, with a smile.

"And what might that be?"

"Get hold of another chap—that's all."

"Men never give girls credit for any feeling," said Bessie, pouting.

"Yes, they are all of them selfish by nature"

"Who?"

"Why, the men, of course"

"You don't mean what you say."

"Don't I?"

"No."

"Only saying so to please you—is that it?"

"I've no doubt it is."

"Well, here's something better than words, lass. Here's a couple of quid for you to buy a new dress, or anything else you may want."

"Oh, you dear, good fellow! And is this for me?"

"Certainly, seeing that I gave it of my own free will."

The girl clapped her hands with delight, gave her companion a kiss, and pocketed the money.

(To be continued.)

The Shooting of Sergeant Hamilton

"Such wrath means madness."
—MARSHALL, "Pizarro."

JOHN RICKEY was generally considered to be one of the smartest troopers in the 12th Lancers in the year 1838, and the sergeant-major who had selected him as his own batman, was daily expecting that the young soldier would be promoted. With the officers and non-commissioned officers he was a favourite, and was most popular with his fellows. All this made the incident which took place on the evening of the 21st of June, 1838, the more inexplicable.

On that day Rickey had been detailed to act as sentry over the stables, and was not due to leave his post till ten o'clock in the evening. Sergeant-major Murphy, therefore, was rather astonished when he entered the barrack-room at Hampton Court at about half-past seven, to find Rickey seated on one of the benches, apparently rather the worse for liquor. He immediately asked the defaulting trooper what he was doing away from his post, and was told that he was only resting himself for a little. It being beneath the dignity of a sergeant-major to arrest a prisoner, Murphy went off to order a sergeant and file to take the offender into custody, and Sergeant Spear, with trooper Kelly and another, went to search for Rickey to bring him to the guard-room.

When the officer and escort reached the barrack-room the man was not there, and they commenced a regular hunt for the missing sentry. Rickey was not to be found about the barracks, and it was surmised that he must have gone into the palace; thither the escort was despatched, and another non-commissioned officer, Sergeant Chittleburgh, was also ordered by his superior officer to take part in the arrest.

When Sergeant Chittleburgh entered the palace he saw John Rickey standing in the large quadrangle, apparently looking for someone. At that moment Sergeant Hamilton came up and joined Chittleburgh. Apparently not liking to tackle a couple of strong sergeants, Rickey went into the building itself, entering a corridor leading to the quarters occupied by Sir Horace Seymour. As he disappeared through the door the guard came into the palace, and Sergeant Chittleburgh signalled to it to proceed through another passage, so as to cut off the fugitive, going himself with Hamilton through the door the trooper had used.

When Chittleburgh and Hamilton had gone a short distance down the passage towards Sir Horace's rooms they saw Rickey standing in a corner, holding a pistol in each hand, and taking aim at them.

"Come along quietly," said Hamilton; "you will only be doing yourself harm if you resist, Rickey."

"You go to h——!" was the genial response. "If you don't go back, Hamilton, I'll put a bullet through you, or through any other man who tries to stop me."

Seeing that Rickey was in a passion, Hamilton turned and advised Chittleburgh to retire, adding that he could manage the trooper much better if he was alone with him. The sergeant, knowing what an influence Hamilton had over the

HOLDING A PISTOL IN EACH HAND.

men, did as he was bid, and returned the way he had entered. He had not, however, gone more than twenty paces across the courtyard when he heard the report of firearms, and hurried back into the corridor, entering by the door through which the guard had passed.

In the passage he saw Rickey in custody of the escort, and about three yards away Hamilton was leaning against the wall, pressing his hands to his stomach, from which blood was issuing. Rickey was marched off to the guard-room, where he was handcuffed, and Hamilton was taken to the barrack-room, and the regimental doctor hastily summoned.

Sergeant Hamilton lingered for about eleven hours, and then died in great agony. His murderer was sent to the Central Criminal Court for trial.

On the 11th of July, John Rickey was placed at the bar, before Mr. Justice Parke, to stand his trial for the wilful murder of James Hamilton. He pleaded "Not Guilty," and was defended by Mr. Phillips.

The first witness was Chittleburgh, who described the hunt for the prisoner, and added that when he saw him in the guard-room after the tragedy Rickey remarked, "I am sorry I have shot Hamilton; I meant the bullet for old Murphy."

Sergeant-major Murphy then stated that he had seen the prisoner in the barrack-room and spoken to him. He had sent for the guard to take him into custody, and while the guard was coming he had seen the prisoner walking towards the palace with a pistol in each hand. The pistols were kept in the barrack-room unloaded. The prisoner would have had to load both his weapons. No loaded firearms are permitted in the barrack-rooms under any circumstances.

Michael Kelly, trooper, was the next witness. He went with the escort to capture Rickey. The prisoner was standing in the angle of a passage in the palace when he saw him. He had a pistol in each hand. Sergeant Hamilton was approaching at the moment. The prisoner called out, "Sergeant Hamilton, if you would sooner lose your life than go without me, I will shoot you, or the first man that comes another step closer to me!" So saying, Rickey put out his right foot, took aim at Hamilton, and fired. The witness made a rush at the prisoner, who turned at him and snapped the second pistol point blank at him. Fortunately, the weapon flashed in the pan. In an instant Kelly closed with Rickey, knocked him down and wrested the pistol from him. A rough-and-tumble fight ensued, but the plucky trooper held on to the fugitive, and, with assistance, the arrest was effected. Rickey had been drinking, but was not drunk.

Sergeant Spear corroborated Kelly's evidence, and said that he had caught sight of the prisoner running towards the palace, and loading a pistol as he ran. He swore, with frightful imprecations, that he would shoot the first man that came near him. After arrest Rickey declared to him that he wanted to hoot Murphy, and had killed Hamilton by mistake.

The assistant-surgeon of the 12th Lancers gave formal evidence of the injuries sustained by poor Hamilton. The deceased had been shot through the stomach, the bullet passing right through the body. From the first there was no hope of the sergeant recovering. That closed the case for the Crown.

For the defence it was urged that Rickey had no reason for shooting Sergeant Hamilton, and had never borne him any grudge. His statements that he wished to kill Sergeant Murphy were obviously inspired by drink, for Murphy had befriended him on many occasions, and even applied for promotion for him. He was the sergeant-major's servant, and apparently very fond of him.

Witnesses to character were called, Captain Edward Vandeleur and other officers swearing that the prisoner had always held a good character in the regiment, and was the last person to willingly take another's life. Rickey was found guilty and sentenced to death, but was recommended to mercy on account of his previous good character. This recommendation was taken into consideration when the Recorder made his report, as was customary in those days, and the death sentence was commuted to one of transportation for life.

Till he died Rickey declared that he meant to kill Murphy, who was a villain and unfit to live, though no one was able to discover why the convict had a grudge against the sergeant-major, nor would Rickey reveal his secret. All he would say of the tragedy was that he had left the stable guard and gone to the barrack-room with the intention of getting pistols to kill his enemy. The motive remains a mystery to this day.

CHAPTER IX.

THE WHEEL AND THE VARIOUS FORMS OF GAROTTE.

THE description of the Maid of Halifax and the Scottish Maiden which we gave in our last number calls to mind other mechanical contrivances for the execution of criminals and others whom the law or tyranny has seen fit to despatch from the world. In importance, possibly, the garotte takes the foremost place, and we will presently describe that ingenious machine; but in considering how it was that the garotte came into use we shall have to commence with a truly historic implement of death, the wheel, and to this we will first turn our attention.

In the able articles entitled, "Times of Torture," which appeared in the early numbers of this paper, mention was made of the wheel, but more as an instrument to inflict pain than as a means of execution. Primarily that was the idea uppermost when the torment of the wheel was invented. It was a combination of torture and death. The author of the articles referred to described how on occasions the victim was bound to the rim of the wheel, and the huge instrument then revolved so as to bring the culprit's body in contact with ever-advancing knives, which ultimately tore the very vitals out of the sufferer. That may be considered as the refinement of the torture element in the punishment of the wheel, as the diabolical enhancement of the penalty when its infliction was entrusted to the hands of the legally unauthorised, as the gratifying of the blood-lust of the Inquisitors and the Vehmgericht. When, however, the dignified law of the land directed that a notorious criminal should be put to death on the wheel, the sentence was carried out solemnly, but without any of the revolting additions which the past-masters of torture added to the process for the delectation of truculent ghouls.

It was in Central Europe that the wheel was most used for the despatch of those who had been adjudged guilty of heinous crime. Traitors and parricides were the chief sufferers, and this terrible form of meeting death was apportioned to them that by their public chastisement the people might be deterred from committing like offences. Whether any punishment ever acts as a deterrent is a moot point, and one which we will not discuss here.

As was usual in the Middle Ages, punishment followed hotfoot on conviction, a couple of days or so at the most intervening between sentence and execution. In the case of parricides several ministers were appointed to assist in preparing the doomed man for the great change which he was so soon to experience; in some States the traitor was similarly consoled, but in others it was thought that the man who could lift his hand against the Lord's anointed was so far steeped in sin that he was past all the ministrations of religion, and he was allowed none to comfort him in the awful period of suspense which formed the gulf between the dock and the scaffold.

Supposing, however, that every amelioration was to be permitted to the condemned, he was taken from the court to his dungeon, usually a damp, reeking cell beneath the level of the ground. The floor was strewn with dank straw, the sunlight never penetrated the dismal apartment, ventilation was nil, the atmosphere reeked with evil exhalations, and noisome vermin swarmed over everything. Here he was visited by one or more monks or ministers, who conversed with him on death. No one had need to speak to him about the disposal of his property and the care of his family, for by the cruel law of the times all his possessions were forfeit to the Crown, and his relations became outcasts and beggars. From the moment of his condemnation he was never left alone, some monk or pastor being always with

him, and, as these good folk cared nothing for the body, their business being entirely with the soul, it may be imagined that the poor wretch had very little opportunity for resting, even if the tortured state of his mind permitted slumber.

Executions by the wheel generally took place in the morning, so that the spectacle of the scaffold and its great object-lesson might be before the populace as long as possible. Before he was led out to the scene of his sufferings the convict was bidden strip and put on a pair of linen drawers. He was then wrapped up in a cloak and placed in the cart which was to take him to the dreadful spot. Beside him sat his ghostly comforters, perpetually dinning into his ears their formula, "Man has but once to die!" As if the poor creature on his way to suffer a violent and dreadful fate did not know that fifty times better than the fat priests who really were consoling themselves by their prating.

On the spot where the execution was to take place—generally the public square of the town—a scaffold was erected. On this stood several burly men dressed in a hideous red, and wearing masks. These were the executioners. On the scaffold, too, was a huge oak wheel, and a block of wood for it to rest against, while on the ground were several bars of iron and a bundle of ropes.

Attended by the priests, the victim was made to ascend the little platform, and was bidden to address the crowd, which had assembled to see the majesty of the law vindicated. His utterances were carefully noted, and the instant he commenced to say anything of an inflammatory nature he was checked and forced to continue in a moderate strain. The speech being over, the sheriff or burgomaster in charge of the execution gave the word, and the "bourreaus" approached the culprit. His cloak was stripped off him, and he stood before the people clad but in the thin linen drawers. Did the cold make him shiver, the jeering mob said that he was a craven and afraid of death. Was the day warm and the convict able to repress his shudders, the crowd declared that he was a hardened traitor and deserving of more torment. No one showed the least pity for the human being who was about to be put out of this world.

A draught of wine was given to him, and then the assistant executioners seized him and laid him on the wheel, which was resting on the ground. A stout rope was placed round his waist, and he was attached firmly to the spokes and hub of the wheel. This was but the preliminary of the actual work of the executioner-in-chief. That functionary now advanced, bearing in his hand a thick bar of iron. Seizing one of the arms of the doomed man, he drew it out along one of the spokes, and fastened it at the elbow with a cord. Then he proceeded to make the rest of the arm fit the rim of the wheel. As it would not do so naturally, the limb was broken by several blows with the iron bar. If the culprit maintained silence during this operation, by grinding the fractured ends of the bones together the executioner generally managed to extract a groan for the edification of the crowd. The other arm was then similarly treated, and the legs likewise attached to the wheel. It was a test of the skill of the executioner to avoid actually breaking the flesh when he smashed the limbs.

When the victim was thus attached to the instrument the great wheel was lifted up and propped against the block of wood, so that all could see the writhing convict. At first the execution ended at this point, the malefactor being permitted to linger until he succumbed to sheer exhaustion. In other words, the punishment of the wheel was but a modification of crucifixion.

Then it occurred to an ingenious tormentor that it would be as well if the torture were increased by breaking several of the ribs, and it became customary to deal a number of heavy blows on the chest with the iron bar, care being taken that too much force was not used, lest unconsciousness should supervene. Every breath thus was made excessively painful, and the poor man died in agony.

With the advent of later ideas of humanity a modification was introduced into the procedure. Through one of the spokes a hole was bored, through which a double cord was passed. The loop of this went round the culprit's neck, and as soon as the officer in charge of the punishment thought that the victim had suffered enough the assistants pulled on this cord and thus strangled the criminal. From this cord sprang two modern methods of execution, namely the process which is called hanging in Austria, and the garotte of Spain, both of which are merely modifications of the same principle. Austrian hanging will be dealt with in a future article.

The first garotte was undoubtedly merely an upright post with a hole in it, through which passed a double cord. The loop of this went round the victim's neck, and when the free ends were pulled the windpipe was constricted, and death ensued from strangulation. Pulling was soon recognised as clumsy and inconvenient, so the free ends of the cord were tied together, a stick was inserted, and thus the cords were twisted until sufficiently constricted. Here we have the simplest form of garotte proper. One man was sufficient to do the necessary twisting, and when he judged that the loop had been drawn sufficiently tight, he fastened the stick with another cord in such a way that the twisted rope could not unwind. Death resulted from slow strangulation.

It was soon found that the cords did not work as satisfactorily as they should do, and an improvement was introduced in the form of an iron collar, to pass round the neck and the upright post. At the back of the pillar a screw, operated by means of levers with heavily-weighted ends, passed through the collar, its end pressing against the upright post. It is clear that when the screw is turned so that it advances into the collar, the latter is drawn closer and closer to the pillar. The neck of the culprit is thus squeezed until life is extinct. Till comparatively recent times this form of garotte has been in force. At present there are two species in use, both of which are more humane than the one just described. In one of these improved instruments the collar is in two pieces, an upper and a lower ring. A very powerful screw operates mechanism, by means of which the upper collar is drawn towards the pillar and the lower thrust from it. If this action is slowly applied death will ensue simply as the result of strangulation, for inasmuch as none of these iron collars press on the side of the neck, the flow of blood from the head is not interfered with, and, consequently, apoplexy, that frequent cause of death by hanging, cannot take place.

If, however, the screw be turned very swiftly, and the double collar so adjusted that one of the rings presses on one vertebra and the other on an adjoining one, then it is quite possible for the spinal column to be dislocated and almost instantaneous death caused thereby. This is the object which clever executioners have in view in districts where this pattern garotte is used.

The other improved implement is less truly a garotte. It has a collar and screw, and in outward appearance is similar to those which we have just described, but a close inspection will show that it differs radically from them. The screw presses against a narrow blade, which projects through the pillar. If the instrument be properly adjusted, when the executioner turns the great levers the collar tightens, as in the ordinary garottes, but at the same time the sharp knife advances, and, passing between two of the bones of the neck, divides the spinal column, thus causing death.

In some of the Spanish dominions the collar and lever are fixed into the back of a chair, to which are attached manacles and fetters for the proper securing of the malefactor, but in general, and especially where the execution is to be public, the old pattern of single post, with a shorter pillar for the culprit to sit on, is adhered to.

About nightfall on the evening preceding an execution the Spanish condemned man is taken from his cell to the prison chapel. Before he leaves his dungeon he is bidden say farewell to it, for he will never re-enter it, it being the custom in Spain for the doomed to pass the whole of the night before they suffer in the chapel. Attended by a couple of priests, and carefully guarded by warders, the convict enters the sacred edifice, and is told to kneel before the high altar. On each side of this are the clergy, and around him, though out of earshot, stand the armed guards. Prayer succeeds prayer for a time, and then a move is made to a pew to rest for a short while. Then again to the altar steps, the priests never allowing the doomed man's mind to stray from the awful nearness of death and from the necessity for repentance.

Towards the morning he is asked if he confesses his crime, and the poor wretch generally is ready enough then to admit that he has been justly condemned. Little does he know that if he persisted in his declaration of innocence, the law of Spain would not permit his execution to take place, for in the code it is expressly laid down that no malefactor is to suffer the extreme penalty until he has confessed his guilt. This the clerics know, and it is their duty to see that the formal statement of guilt is made, as well as to prepare the victim for the tomb. Worn out by the importunities of the friars, the criminal is easily persuaded to acknowledge that he has been rightly sentenced. The

admission made to the counsellors is next repeated in the presence of the guards, who are summoned for that purpose. The man's doom is then sealed; nothing can save him from the scaffold.

Time is getting on, and the monks turn their attention to forcing the convict to repent. Jaded and weary, the poor prisoner takes but little interest in the proceedings; however, he is not allowed to rest until he has made a general confession covering the chief misdeeds of his life. He is then told that he can sleep for a short while if he so desires it. In spite of the fearful prospect in front of him, the condemned generally falls off to sleep in the chapel, and he seems to have hardly dozed off when he is awakened and told that all is ready for the celebration of Mass, the last service which he will attend on earth.

EXECUTION BY GAROTTE.

There is something inexpressibly solemn in this service held in the presence of, and for the benefit of, a human being who in a few minutes will have solved the great mystery which we call death. The murmur of the priest repeating the familiar Latin phrases, the ceremonial, the stillness of the chapel, broken occasionally by the tinkle of the sacring bell, all impress the mind, and when the picture is framed by the armed representatives of the law one cannot help comparing the mercy of Divine justice with the frail ordinances of man. At this last Mass the doomed receives communion. The service over, the officiating priest hurries to get his vestments off, so that he may again be at the side of the prisoner, who is now regarded as a dying man, and the prayers for the dying are recited over him. He may understand them, or he may not, but for all that the law requires that they shall be recited.

A compassionate warder next brings the convict some

coffee and bread, which he eats in the chapel, and more prayers fill up the time until the governor of the prison enters and announces that the hour for the execution has arrived. A final prayer with the attendant monk, a glass of brandy hurriedly swallowed, and the condemned gives himself up to the executioners, who array him in a black robe, or in a saffron-coloured "san benito." His arms are fastened with cords, but the hands are left free, and in some districts he is given a blessed candle to carry. He is then placed in a cart, his comforters by his side, and the procession, consisting of civil and military dignitaries and subordinates, sets off for the scaffold.

On the scaffold the garotte has been erected, and beside it there is often placed a small altar, furnished with candles and crucifix. The cart stops at the foot of the platform, and the condemned is assisted to mount the steps. At his heels follow the priests and executioners. Around the crowd stands in mournful silence, for executions are not regarded with favour in the land of the dons. Advancing to the edge of the scaffold, the prisoner asks the people to pray with him and for him, and then enters on his last devotions with his ministers.

Those ended, he is led to the foot of the garotte, and bidden to sit down on the stool provided, or in the chair, as the case may be. The assistant executioners swiftly pass cords round his legs and body so that he cannot move, but the hands, in which a crucifix has been placed, are left clasped before his breast. At his side stands the priest, still whispering words of hope into the ear of the dying man. He is offered the cross to kiss, and then a cap is drawn over his face, shutting out for ever the light of the world. In some places, however, the cap and robe are not used, though it must be admitted that they add greatly to the impressiveness of the dreadful scene.

The chief executioner next takes the iron collar and, feeling the culprit's neck with his clammy fingers, carefully adjusts it according to the kind of instrument which he is to be executed on. Try to imagine the feelings of the condemned as the fingers of the executioner pass over his neck, as he digs his cold digits in trying to feel for the bones! What an awful sensation it must be to know that each touch is but the preliminary of the iron death grasp from which there is no escape!

Satisfied that he has found the proper position, the executioner encircles the criminal's neck with the collar, fastening it with a snap. The priest bends forward and mutters a few last words, while the executioner steps behind the grim instrument and grasps the ponderous levers which turn the screw.

With a deft swing he sends them twirling round. A horrid crunching sound is heard; the limbs of the victim are visibly convulsed, the writhing of the features can almost be seen through the cap. At last the screw ceases to turn, but from the movements of the bound figure on the stool it is clear that he is not dead. As is only too common, the garotte has failed to do its work properly. The horrified spectators watch with strained eyes the heaving of the convict's chest, the twitching of his hands, and the convulsive writhing of his whole frame. Gradually the motion grows less, till at last only the fingers move. Then, with a mighty effort, which almost bursts the bands which hold him, the unfortunate malefactor gives up the ghost. The priests mutter a few more prayers, the crowd commences to melt away, and the execution is over.

After remaining on the scaffold for some hours, the body is taken down and carried to a church, where it is given honourable burial.

Such is an average execution in Spain. In theory the garotte can cause instant death; in practice it does so about once in fifteen times. Still the Spaniards adhere to this cruel and obsolete means of slaying their murderers.

When the punishment is inflicted privately the ceremonial part of the execution is done away with, and even the cap is dispensed with, so that the unhappy clergy, whose duty it is to attend, have to witness the hideous contortions of the strangling man's face; to see the rolling eyeballs, the foam-drenched lips, and the knotted veins which start from the forehead as if they were going to burst. Moreover, when an execution is to be carried out privately, the executioner is generally a novice, and so the sufferings of the doomed are certain to be prolonged.

What ever way you look at it the garotte is a most unsatisfactory means of killing criminals, and the sooner it is done away with entirely the better for the credit of civilisation.

THE SIN OF SELINA.

A YOUNG MOTHER MURDERS HER OWN BABY IN THE HOPES THAT HER LOVER WILL MARRY HER.

"Guard well, O Heir of Eternity, the portal of sin—the thought."
—BULWER LYTTON, "Lucretia."

ONE night in the late autumn of 1877, Mrs. Wadge, an old and respected inhabitant in the Cornish town of Launceston, was aroused from her bed by a violent knocking at the street door. Terrified with thoughts of robbery and violence, the aged lady crept downstairs, and inquired cautiously who it was that demanded admittance at so unseasonable an hour.

She heard a woman cough and an infant wailing.

She waited to hear no more, but threw open the door, regardless of the possible consequences. Peering into the darkness of the night, she discerned the form of a young woman holding a baby to her breast, with an older child standing by her side, and clutching at her ragged gown. The woman's attitude was the exemplification of dejection. As the door opened she stumbled forward.

"Selina! my God!" cried Mrs. Wadge, reeling against the door.

The girl threw herself on her knees at the woman's feet, sobbing wildly, and holding out her baby as a token of supplication.

"Oh, mother, mother, don't send me away—don't! Anything but that! Oh, my mother, listen to me! I *am* your daughter. Listen! I am starving—these are starving, my little darlings. Take me in, mother; let them come in out of the rain!"

Mrs. Wadge made no verbal reply. Trembling, she raised her daughter and led her into the house, the child following close on its mother. The girl stood shivering with her children in the passage.

"I will get a light, Selina; I must see you."

Mrs. Wadge relighted a candle which had been blown out by the storm, and motioned the shivering girl to the kitchen. Selina crept like a hunted, frightened creature into the humble apartment. Her appearance was pitiable. She was still very young, that was evident, and had been beautiful, but youth had gone out of her white, hungry face. Hungry! yes, hungry—hungry for protection, for sheltering arms, for human love and home. Her shabby, travel-soiled dress was torn and rent, and from her thin shoulders hung a cloak of dripping rags. She wore no hat, and her hair, raven black, fell in wild disorder about her wasted face. Raindrops glistened in the ebon tresses, and tears stood in the large, frightened eyes. The bodice of that garment which had once been a dress was half open. She was suckling her baby.

All the time she shivered, and her hands shook as if with palsy. The elder child, a boy of about five years old, clung to her gown and peered anxiously at Mrs. Wadge, as the old woman brought food from a cupboard and placed it on a table.

"Here, sit down and have some supper."

The little boy began to devour his meal ravenously, but Selina took nothing.

"Not now, mother, not now; I can't."

Mrs. Wadge poured out some brandy and gave it to the shivering girl.

"Drink that; you are sick with the cold, Selina."

She drank down some of the spirit, and a bright, hectic spot burnt in her sunken cheek.

"Oh, mother, you are too good to me," she said, and began to sob again.

"Tell me all about it, Selina. What's the use of crying?"

"I don't know. I should die if I couldn't cry. But there, I wish I was dead—dead and gone from it all."

"Are you married, daughter?"

"No, mother."

"Ah, God, I thought so!"

"Mother, why did you ever let me leave home? Why did you? I was good, wasn't I, when I was with you? But then, all alone—London—the streets and the cruel faces—no love, no friend——"

The girl shuddered, and closed her eyes, as if to shut out some hideous vision. Mrs. Wadge did not speak.

"You know, mother," Selina continued, "I met a man I loved. I gave myself to him. He went away—he left me. He was a sailor. God only knows where he is now. I tried

"Selina! my God!"

to work, but who would employ such as me. I starved, my darlings starved. Nothing but that would have brought me back to you, mother, with this disgrace—nothing—nothing! Had I been alone I would have starved, died; but then there was my boy."

With an eloquent gesture she pointed to the boy at the table.

"You have done right, Selina. You should have come to me before," said Mrs. Wadge.

She stretched out her arms to her daughter. With a wild rush of passionate grief the girl threw herself upon her knees, was clasped in the old, shrivelled arms, and sobbed out her sorrow on the long-denied bosom.

So Selina came home.

It was announced to the neighbours that Mrs. Wadge's daughter had returned, a broken-hearted widow, with two children. Most of these people had known the girl when a child, and accepted the story in perfect faith.

For some considerable time after her home-coming, Selina was confined to her bed, the victim of fever, and she was the recipient of a thousand little presents from the acquaintances of her childhood.

"Isn't it funny," she said one day to her mother, when she had received a more than usual quantity of fruit, flowers, and remembrances from neighbours, "isn't it funny that if these people only knew the truth they would shun and abhor me? And yet I loved James—ah! I do love him even now—as much as the best of them love their husbands. It's a funny world, isn't it?"

After a time she got sufficiently strong to walk out, and gradually something of her old strength returned to her. One thing always struck her mother as remarkable, which was that, although she was whole-heartedly—indeed, almost deliriously—attached to her elder boy, it was easy to discern that she harboured no such feelings in her bosom for the baby. She was kind to it, attentive, and maternal in her conduct, but her love was all centred in the wild, passionate affection which she cherished for the other child.

She lived in the seclusion of her mother's house, tranquil, if not happy; safe from the storm and the tempest of the outside world; a wounded bird that crept to its nest with ruffled plumage and broken wing.

But the serenity of her present existence was not fated to endure; it typified but the deceitful calm that lies upon the ocean, presaging in reality a fury of tempestuous disaster.

One morning she went crying to her mother, half out of her wits with excitement and pleasure. The postman had brought her a letter.

"Read this, mother—oh, read it quickly! Tell me I am not dreaming!" she cried; and thrust the missive into Mrs. Wadge's hand.

This is what she read:

"My darling Selina,—I have searched for you everywhere, but to no purpose. At last I found your mother's address—I knew she lived in Launceston—and write you this in the hope that it will somehow reach you. My darling, I will keep my promise. I am a little richer than I was, and I don't think I shall go on my travels again. Will you marry me, beloved? If you get this, write at once to above address, and let me know.—Your loving

"James."

"It looks mighty fine," said Mrs. Wadge, removing her spectacles. "You must write to him at once."

"Yes, yes, mother. Oh, I am so glad—so glad that I have wronged him!"

"I think he wronged you."

"No, no; he means to marry me. He loves me; you can see that. He will be so pleased to find little James grown into such a fine boy, and——"

Selina's happy prattle was interrupted by the baby squalling. She flushed, turned pale, then burst into tears.

"Oh, God—and I had forgotten!"

Mrs. Wadge was amazed.

"Why, what's the matter now? Aren't you glad your lover has come home, and is going to make an honest woman of you?"

"Oh, mother, you don't know!"

"Know what?"

"Why I am so miserable."

"Why, Selina—why?"

"It's the baby."

"The baby!"

The girl pressed her face close to her mother's and whispered in her ear:

"It's not his."

For a moment the old woman was rendered speechless by this announcement. It was terrible. Her daughter had sinned—she had known that; but she had always thought her plea had been her love. She had never for a moment dreamt that Selina had been the mistress of more than one man.

"Selina, this is very dreadful."

"Mother, you don't know how it happened. James had gone; I was alone, starving with his child. I could not see my darling starve. It was only once. I was mad when I found I was going to have a child from a man I hated. I would have killed myself, only—only I was a coward!"

"What will this lover of yours say?"

"Ah, what indeed?"

"Well, he left you to starve; he is as much to blame as you. You have both something to forgive. Let bygones be bygones on both sides, and settle down together."

Three days following this conversation found James W—— in Launceston. Selina met him at the railway station, rushed into his arms, and covered his sun-browned face with kisses before a platform of astonished passengers.

Selina would not take him home until she had told him

her secret. The man was more staggered than her mother had been at the news. He found it hard to believe that Selina could ever have been unfaithful to him, despite the fact that he had practically abandoned her to the horrors of destitution. He who had so much to be forgiven found it difficult to forgive.

"Did you love the man, Selina?" he asked.

"Love him? I hated him!"

"Then, why——"

"I was starving—your child was starving."

The reply touched him; in its truth lay a forcible reproach more poignant than angry words and hysterical recriminations. He had wronged Selina, and therefore he would try and forgive her.

He accompanied her to Mrs. Wadge's house, was introduced to the old lady and his own son, now growing rapidly into a fine boy. He also saw the baby which was not his, and he did not endure the ordeal well. He flinched, called the infant a brat, and left the house hurriedly.

Selina was distracted. All her bright hopes were dashed rudely to the ground, her dream of perpetual happiness in the arms of her lover dispelled. He would never marry her now. She was certain of that. He would leave her and forget her—abandon her once more to endless sorrow.

The sight of the baby became hateful to her. Why had it not died that night of the storm, when she stumbled, starving, to her mother's door? She would have been free then to marry her love, to marry the man she loved, nay, worshipped with an intensity past all description. Meanwhile James W—— had spent the night in the local hotel. In the morning he saw Selina again.

"I am going away," he said.

"Oh, my darling, don't say so. Have a little pity—on me!"

"I am going away, Selina, to-morrow. On one condition you can accompany me—marry me."

"Oh, my love, what is it?"

"Get rid of that child."

"How can I?"

He shrugged his shoulders.

"Perhaps your mother will take care of it."

"That is impossible; she is too ill—too old."

"Well, if you do not get rid of the brat we part. Get some neighbour to take it."

Selina was more distracted than ever. She felt she was hovering on the brink of happiness, and yet was being dragged back by horrible compelling forces. In the afternoon she took the baby and little James for a walk into the open country. All the time she was thinking what to do. She could not live without her lover, at all costs she must attain her great desire, she must be with her beloved James. Oh! if only the child would die, the sleeping child in her arms, if it would never wake! Her walk brought her to the side of an old rustic well. She looked down into its depths, filled with brown, muddy water. She looked and looked, as if fascinated by something she saw, and little James peeped as well.

"What is down there, mother?" he asked.

She did not answer, but thought—death! Death lurked in the well; death, which could deliver her from all her trouble; death, which could give her the lover for whose embrace she perpetually hungered. A terrible idea burnt in her brain. She trembled all over, shook as if with cold, and still stared with wild, dilated eyes into the murky depths of the unclean water. Little James threw a stone down the well.

CAST IT INTO THE SILENT WATERS.

It splashed; a few ripples, it was gone, lost and hidden for ever. Suddenly she raised the baby above her head, held it there and laughed. And then, with a terrible gesture, she cast her offspring from her, cast it with the fury of a maniac into the silent water.

A splash, a few ripples; it was gone, lost, and hidden for ever!

Selina returned home.

"Where is your baby?" asked Mrs. Wadge.

"I have left him with Mrs. Smythe. He was not well."

"Why, mother," cried little James, "baby's down the hole. You threw him down!"

"Be silent!" said Selina. "You must be mad!"

"Not mad, murderess!"

The words came from Mrs. Wadge. The old woman was transformed, her eyes blazed with wrath. She stood upright, and spoke with a strength of former years. Selina, with a startled scream, shrank against the wall.

"Mother, mother, what are you saying?"

"You have killed your child! You will be hanged!"

"Oh, my God! It is a lie! a lie! Don't drive me mad with your lies! You wish to kill me, do you? Ah! I see! Well, I will go away—I will frustrate you—I——"

She sank fainting to the ground. When she recovered she was in the hands of the police. The well was dragged, the body of the drowned infant recovered. Selina was put upon her trial. When the judge assumed the black cap and told her in solemn tones that she must die a shameful death, she looked an old woman. She swayed in the hands of her keepers, and stared, not at the judge, not at the jury, but down into the well of the court, where, pale and abashed, James W—— sat, with bowed head and averted eyes. As the last words fell from the judge's lips—the words of doom!—as the wretched creature in the dock turned to leave for ever the light of public day, the man looked up—their eyes met for the last time on earth. What words can describe the agony of that glance? Was there love in the doomed face, love or sorrow, or only remorse? We cannot say. A brief fraction of a second, that was all, and yet what tragedy that look contained!

When on the 15th of August, 1878, the condemned woman was led into the shadow of the gallows, she seemed resigned. She sobbed pitifully, but not, she said, because she was about to die, but rather for her sin. There was such meek submission in her face—ah! once so beautiful!—that even those grown callous by custom to such scenes were moved to pity.

"He said he would marry me if I got rid of baby," she said at last.

The bell began to toll.

The Prisoner Laughed.

A CELEBRATED criminal trial took place at Liverpool late in the forties of last century.

A witness, referring to the man in the dock, in the course of his evidence, said, "He asked me what I was staring at, and I replied not at a handsome man." The court, glad of an opportunity to seek relief from the gory details, laughed at this mild witticism unrebuked by the judge.

The prisoner laughed, too, but was heard to say under his breath to the warder nearest him, "I'd spoil his face for him if I had him up here for a little bit."

A Welsh Murder.

A RUFFIAN was tried and condemned to death for a very brutal murder in Wales in 1821. It appeared from the evidence that he had seen an old woman change a crown piece at a certain roadside public-house and had followed her with the intention of demanding the money by threats of violence

He made no confession or direct allusion to the crime, but he said, grudgingly, the night before he was hanged, "If old Mother —— had given the bit o' silver when I axed 'er, it wouldn't have happened!" The poor victim was found kicked to death, because she declined to hand over four and ninepence!

Flattering!

A CERTAIN barrister, more remarkable for his talents than his good looks, was once cross-examining a witness, and showing considerable heat in the process. He was endeavouring to get the witness to declare that a man he had encountered on the morning of the crime—it was a serious charge—was the prisoner.

"Come now," he said persuasively, "you must know what the man was like since you say you stared hard at him as he passed you. Was he a handsome man?"

"No, sir," was the reply; "and now I think of it, he was very like you."

The Judge and His Past.

A LEGEND is told of a certain judge, well-known for the fast life he had led as a young man, and for his "hanging" propensities. This legal luminary flourished from 1748 to 1765, and it is recorded that on one occasion he remarked to a notorious offender that his face was familiar to him.

The prisoner reminded his lordship that he had once met him, and under circumstances not altogether creditable to the former. "What has become of your companions in crime?" asked the judge; and the prisoner replied, with the utmost sang-froid, that "they were all hanged except your honour and myself."

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DAINTY NOVELS

ONE PENNY WEEKLY.

Leaves from Our Notebook.

How Tragedies Run in Families.

A MURDER took place in a railway carriage on the line between London and Portsmouth a few years ago. A naval petty officer, named Scott, had accompanied from Portsmouth to the capital a girl employed in the former town, and on the return journey he shot the young woman and then himself, their bodies being discovered when the train stopped at Guildford.

His brother committed suicide by throwing himself in front of a passing train at Copnor, near Portsmouth, and his father hanged himself from a rafter in the house he occupied at Buckland, near the great naval town.

A Brutal Murderer.

IN the year 1652, there lived in the Island of Thanet, in Kent, one Adam Sparckling, Esq., who had, twenty years before, married Katherine, the daughter of Sir Robert Lenkner, in Kent. This Sparckling had a large estate, but had almost exhausted it by drinking, gaming, and other forms of debauchery and extravagance. At last several executions were issued against him, and he was compelled to keep at home and make his house his prison. This worried and annoyed him exceedingly, and his conduct towards his wife became so unbearable that she was frequently compelled to lock herself in her room in order to protect herself from his violence.

On Saturday night, December 15, 1652, he evidently made up his mind to do his wife some grievous injury, and, being in the kitchen, about ten o'clock, he sent for a man named Martin, a poor old servant, who was then in bed, to get up and come to him. Martin obeyed the summons, and when he arrived in the kitchen he found there Sparckling and his wife and a man named Ewell, who was employed by Sparckling. The last-named ordered Martin to bind Ewell's legs, which the latter permitted him to do, as he thought it was but an odd whim of his master's. Sparckling then began to rave at his wife, who sat by him, and only answered him with kind words. Suddenly he drew his dagger, and struck her in the face with it; but she made no protest, though she was severely hurt in the jaw. He still continued to rage at her, and she, being very much afraid, arose from her seat and went to the door. Her husband followed her, and seizing a large chopping knife, struck her a violent blow on the wrist, almost severing the hand from her arm, so that her hand hung down only by the sinews and skin. No help was near. Ewell was bound, and Martin, being old and weak, dare not interpose, fearing for his own life, and only prayed his mistress to be quiet, hoping all would be well, and, getting a napkin, bound up her hand with it.

After this, towards the morning, Sparckling, still raging at his wife, struck her a most terrific blow on the head with a cleaver, and she at once fell on her knees, the blood pouring in torrents from the fearful wound in her head. She prayed God to pardon her own and her husband's sins, hoping that God would forgive him, as she did; but while she was thus praying, her brutal husband struck her another fearful blow on the head with the cleaver, almost splitting the skull in two, whereupon she fell face downwards, a corpse. Sparckling then killed six dogs, and threw four of them by his wife's corpse, and, finding she was dead, he struck her twice on the legs with the cleaver, and then compelled Martin to wash Ewell's face with her blood, after which he washed Martin's face and his own with the gory fluid.

He was soon after carried to Sandwich Gaol, and tried at the Assizes for the murder of his wife, found guilty, and was hanged on April 27, 1653, dying hard, and without any signs of repentance.

He would not allow either minister or friend to speak to him after his condemnation.

Replies to Queries

LEFROY.—A special account of the case appeared in *Yes or No?*

LEGHORN.—Yes; a real "Bill Sykes" was sentenced to a term of five years for burglary some time ago, and the coincidence was pointed out at the time.

MARC ANTONY.—We have no intention of recording a merely disgusting case which is without interest or importance. They were hanged at the Old Bailey in 1835.

GUILO.—Strychnia is, more or less, a remedy for intoxication, but a doctor was once sentenced to five years for administering it, so we advise caution. Try other and less drastic methods first.

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